

Interview with

Harry Ashmore,  
Atlanta, Georgia,  
20 June 1992

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: [Let me] make sure this thing is running. Yes, it seems to be doing all right. What I would like to have you tell me about first is the Commonwealth College speech that I have always heard you wrote for Orval [Faubus]. Can you tell me about how that came to be?

Harry Ashmore: Well, there is confusion in my mind and Henry Woods' about the exact sequence of events. I don't think that's too important, but I talked to Henry about this the last time I saw him. What happened was that John Wells, who was running the [Francis] Cherry organization, was doing the hatchet work for the Cherry campaign. I don't think John, but somebody with the Cherry campaign came in to see me and said they were going to put out a handbill with this Commonwealth College story in it. I said to them, "Well, let me tell you something. If you do that..." We were nominally supporting Cherry with no enthusiasm. I said, "Let me tell you something."—this is Joe McCarthy time, you know—and I said, "We have all heard that goddamn story. We've got that damn story in the files over here, and we know he was at Commonwealth College, and I'm not going to tolerate that kind of smear. I'm just

going to warn you that if you do run this goddamn thing anywhere, or anybody else publishes it or an ad”—first, they wanted an ad, and I said we won’t take that—“And I want to tell you something else. If you run it, I’m going to have a front-page editorial denouncing Cherry. It’s absolutely outrageous.” So they circulated an ad down in Little Rock, and I denounced Cherry duly.

RR: Who came to you with this?

HA: I can’t remember—somebody from Cherry’s campaign.

RR: Not Wells?

HA: Wells was not—I’m sure Wells was responsible for it because he was doing the hatchet work. I don’t think John was there. It seemed to me it might have been—was Leffel Gentry running that campaign?

RR: Yes.

HA: It may have been Leffel. It was somebody I knew. They came in downstairs to seek ad space, and they sent them up to see me. I said we wouldn’t accept the ad, and “We’re not going to run this goddamn thing.” I warned them, “If you run it, I’m really going to denounce Cherry.” So I did. Well, the thing came out, and Orval panicked, just completely fell apart. He issued a flat denial that he had ever been to Commonwealth College. It was absolutely absurd on the face of it. This was very late in the campaign. This was in the last two or three days before the runoff. So Ed Dunaway, who doesn’t call me—my recollection is that it was just

the people at the *Gazette* [that] he had been in touch with. Henry Woods said that he and Dunaway had taken time—he had guaranteed the money, [and] he was out trying to raise it for a half-hour of television time for Orval to reply to this, and [that] it would be on the Pine Bluff station. I think that was the station he went on. I think maybe they actually did the broadcast in Pine Bluff. I'm not sure. In any case, time had been reserved, and Ed was out raising money to pay for it, if he had to use his own guarantee. Then either he referred me to Henry or Henry called me. So Henry's recollection—this is really confusing, and I don't have any idea what the truth is. My recollection originally was Orval was at the Marion Hotel, and I went down to see Orval. My recollection is he was just saying this is a complete hoax. I told him that he had made the first mistake in denying this. "You've got to go in now and admit you were there, and I'll do what I can."

Henry tells me when I compared notes with him that I'm wrong about that, that, in fact, Orval was somewhere down state at the time. He wasn't even in Little Rock when this started. I'm with him on this. Henry and I then went out to my house, and we put the speech together. I did most of the writing, and we hacked it out in the afternoon. I saw Orval somewhere at some point. It must have been later. Henry's memory is certainly as good as mine, but according to Henry I couldn't have seen Orval until after the speech, which may very well be the case. I remembered it the other way, but it doesn't make any difference. The point was that we all told him, "You've got to face up to this." I wrote the speech that he delivered, well, most of it, along with Henry. I'm not sure whether Ed had any

input or not. I don't think he did. I think he was mainly raising money.

RR: This was out at your house on Southwood Road?

HA: That's right. That's where Henry and I worked on the speech. I tell you, the only discrepancy in his memory and mine—I know that I saw Orval somewhere, possibly the day after the speech. I thought it was before. I thought I went that afternoon after I talked with Ed and Henry down at the Marion. My recollection was that Henry was down there with him, and then we talked to Orval. Then he and I went out to my house. He [Henry] said that was not correct. Orval was not in Little Rock. He didn't get back until the next day.

RR: Meaning you all just went ahead and wrote the speech without [him]?

HA: Well, no, I guess somebody talked to him on the phone. He knew there was going to be a television speech. But at some point I did talk to Orval, you know. According to Henry's recollection, it would have had to have been after the speech. My recollection is the other way around. [It] doesn't make any difference because the conversation was academic. Now, he agreed. I mean, he would have agreed to anything.

RR: He was pretty desperate, wasn't he?

HA: He was desperate, and he was in an absolute funk. I mean he just fell apart. He didn't know what the hell to do about this. He had already made this stupid press conference statement where he denied it all.

RR: How did he handle that? I mean, how did he get around the denial?

HA: Well, I have forgotten. It took some pretty fancy footwork. I think what he said

was that he had been misinterpreted. He didn't say he had been misquoted. I think that is the usual wile, isn't it? [He said] that what he intended to say was that he had been there a very short time, and when he found out what was going on there, that he left, and that he had no further connection with it ever. That's what he intended to say, but somehow it got to be a denial that he had ever been there.

RR: The "very short time" part, was that Orval's contribution, or was that yours?

HA: Well, that was Orval's statement, and we didn't have anything really to refute it. What we had in the records that showed was something in a yearbook and something in the student newspaper. So I guess this damn story had been printed sometime before.

RR: That surprises me because this stuff—when you mentioned that a while ago about having the story in the files, that was new to me. I didn't know it had been [collected].

HA: I don't know whether we had—well, we had it in the files. I knew about it.

RR: Dave Hacker at some point did a story about Commonwealth College after this became an issue—as background stuff.

HA: Well, we had stuff about Commonwealth College—not necessarily involving Orval, but I think it was in the files. I know that I knew about it. I didn't have any doubts that he had been there. I don't know how active he was. Of course, it made so much sense. If you could know old man Sam Faubus—he could send him to a college like that, hoping by God, it would make a Christian out of him or

make a Wobbly out of him anyway. So Orval's story was, which I accepted for the purposes of the speech, that he had gone there and stayed just a few weeks. He was deliberately vague whether it was two weeks or ten days. Obviously, he was trying to cover his ass from what the hell was going on. I think it's probably true that he didn't stay there. Now, why he left—the biggest lie he told was [that] he left because they were practicing free love and that deeply offended him. Now, you talk about a preposterous lie. I didn't use that in the speech, but that's what he had said. He talked about this later when he had to.

RR: You mean that was out of character with Orval?

HA: Well, I would think it would have been out of character with any eighteen year old hillbilly—a horny boy coming down out of [the mountains] being deeply offended by free love and all these loose morals [laughter] around the college. So that was the basis of it. I worked around it in the speech, and then we went on the attack against Cherry for using this dreadful thing. I told Henry sympathy for dredging up this thing—a poor boy down from the mountains trying to get an education [who] realizes he's gotten in the wrong place and left. [He] never went back, never returned, [and] all that crap. I don't have a copy of the speech. I'm not sure that a copy is in existence, but it may be somewhere. I don't know whether anybody published the text of the damn thing or not.

RR: I haven't ever come across it.

HA: Orval—even after that, even now, he will give me credit for saving his ass. He'll say that.

RR: Yes, he does.

HA: I've got that terrible book he wrote that he autographed to me, "To my old friend, Harry, favors." So that's about all I can recall of the story. The confusion between Henry's version and mine I don't think is any real problem. The conversation with Orval had nothing really to do with it—just a strong impression I had of what a funk he was in [and] how he was just falling apart.

RR: Is this the speech that he—would he have delivered this particular speech in the Pine Bluff ballpark—open-air park—with the wind blowing?

HA: It's possible. I'm not sure. My impression is that he delivered the speech in the studio, but I may be wrong about that.

RR: It would make more sense. Jimmy Karam tells an enchanting little story about being in one of these critical speeches, and I thought it was this one.

HA: He certainly wasn't. I never saw Karam in connection with this.

RR: Well, Jimmy's story is that he stood beside Orval and held the pages down because the wind was blowing them away.

HA: Well, that's entirely possible. My impression is that—I don't know whether by that time, whether KLC, or whatever it was, had a studio in Little Rock or not. I don't think maybe it did.

RR: KHTV, wasn't it?

HA: Yes. I don't think—maybe they did that early.

RR: Probably not.

HA: Maybe they did. So I think maybe he had to go to Pine Bluff. Possibly they had a

rally already scheduled, and Ed bought air time to broadcast it. I know the broadcast had not been originally scheduled because Ed had to go out and shake the tree to get enough money to pay for it. I think he paid for most of it himself. He guaranteed it in order to reserve the time. Now, all this was taking place in, like, two days, you know. The thing was opened, and then he had to get back, and so my recollection is that he made the speech the day after the poster was up, after the circular.

RR: Could you all see some immediate turn-around in the campaign after he made that speech?

HA: Yes. My recollection is that everybody, including Orval, thought he was beaten. You know, he had just edged into the runoff, and I have always thought—I may be giving it more weight than it deserves—that Cherry was thinking this charge cost him [Faubus] the damn election. It wasn't so much that Orval won, but a reaction [against Cherry]. It was a stupid thing for him [Cherry] to do.

RR: Can you explain the anatomy of that mistake? Here is what I mean. Here it was 1954, [and] McCarthyism was riding high, meaning most Americans thought Joe McCarthy was probably right. Only people like you and Ed Dunaway and people who are now considered sensible were offended by McCarthyism. How, then, was there a backlash of enough size—you see where I'm heading? Why did that offend a majority of voters in conservative Arkansas?

HA: Well, conservative Arkansas, but the chief critic of Joe McCarthy was Bill Fulbright. So I don't think McCarthy as such. I think there was a reaction against

McCarthy as a bully boy. Ideologically, it probably didn't make a whole lot of difference, but I don't know how much I can appraise that. I think in large part it was a reaction of dirty pool, last-minute trickery, against Cherry. Regardless of what the charges—if there had been a foot massage—I think there would have been some of the same kind of reaction. Orval was running with the [campaign as an] underdog anyway. Cherry was an awful ass who ran a terrible campaign, and, really, he was almost a caricature of the opposite of Orval. So I think, to put all those things together, it would be very hard to analyze how much *per se* the communism charge—or whether it was just—some of it certainly was in reaction against trying to smear the guy with an obviously trumped up charge. In fact, I think another part [was that] I don't think anybody could believe Orval Faubus was a communist. You know, he's guilty of many things, and, of course, they [the Faubus family] might have been a Wobblies, but I guess he was rebelling against them.

RR: In fact, I've spent a lot of time speculating on that very thing: how could Orval have turned out to be a right-winger, being the son of old Sam?

HA: Well, I guess we all play these damn games of curbstone psychology. I think Orval was in kind of a rebellion against Sam. Sam was, I suppose, a very domineering and strong-minded man, without any question.

RR: He was.

HA: I think Orval was fighting back against Pappy. He wasn't going to do what Pappy tells him to do. And my sense of Orval has always been almost total absence of

total conviction about anything. There was an expediency. He was like George Bush—whichever the hell way the wind is blowing—an element, and I guess it applies to some degree to this, that I don't think I've ever done entire justice in writing about Orval or in writing about the whole period, [is] the class aspect of this and the resentment against Ed Dunaway and me and the town of Little Rock and the fact that Orval was an outsider. Of course, he hadn't been governor or elected then, but he had been around the state house, and he knew that a lot of people didn't take him very seriously, including me. I didn't take him very seriously. When he was hanging around out there with Sid McMath, I saw him occasionally, and I found him quite pleasant. I certainly had nothing against him, but he ran a kind of piss-ass campaign, and he tried to flirt around with the race thing and then backed off of it. Cherry was an absolute asshole. He was almost impossible. I voted for Orval, I'm sure, in the first primary. We didn't formally endorse [anyone]. We didn't formally condemn Cherry until this thing came out, and then we said, Cherry doesn't deserve to be [governor], and I suppose that editorial had some effect in the campaign. We put it on the front page.

RR: Did you all ever become social friends?

HA: With Orval?

RR: Yes.

HA: Not in any real sense. I avoided, pretty much as a matter of principle, doing much socializing with guys who were in office. I didn't see Sid McMath. Although I was very fond of Sid, I didn't see much of Sid socially. Rockefeller—I just felt

that if you are in the position that I was as the editor of the paper, keeping a distance was desirable. I didn't want to get under any obligation to anybody. Not that I would have avoided social contact. I'm sure there were occasions when I would have a drink with him when we were going to some semi-official and political cocktail party or something. No, I don't think I was ever in the mansion after Orval was elected.

RR: After he became governor—before 1957, during that first two and a half years?

HA: I don't even know where Orval lived during that time. I don't recall having any sustained contact with him. He was first in Sid's office, and then he became a highway director, I guess. He wasn't a commissioner. He was a director of the highway department, and I would see him around, but I didn't see much of him. I didn't have a very strong impression of him either way. I was not particularly impressed by the campaign he ran, which was the old populist horseshit that I always tend to react against. He was out there playing to the hilt and doing what I think was completely reasonable and proper to do, running against Francis Cherry—with the contrast in the shit-kicking persona of his, which is very effective against this damn stiff shirt. He was [Cherry] not only was a stiff shirt, but he looked like one. You know, he looked—do you remember Francis Cherry?

RR: Yes.

HA: You know, he looked kind of like Chief Justice Burger. [Laughter] He wore that short white hair [and had a] shit-ass look about him. He was one, you know. He was a terrible goddamn snob and sort of a fool. He had a bad administration. It

was one of these penny-pinching administrations.

RR: On welfare, especially, I understand.

HA: Oh, yes.

RR: Orval tied into him.

HA: Then he led this—did that happen with Cherry? These goddamn right-wing [inaudible] groups that attacked Sid McMath on the highway business—that was while Sid was still in office.

RR: Yes.

HA: That was Stony Beechamp and that crowd.

RR: Sid says the AP&L crowd was behind it.

HA: I'm sure they were in it. They surely were. There, again, I was in an awkward position because they turned up enough real stuff. I mean the goddamn highway department was corrupt. It has always been corrupt, and Sid had played politics with the commissioners. He had some people on the damn highway commission and on the take. We knew it, and they did expose it and document it, so I didn't [inaudible] as I was inclined to do because I knew a good deal about what the hell was happening. Here again, it seemed to me that some of this stuff—we had been inveighing against this kind of horseshit anyway. [What was] going on at the state house was normal state of life at the state house. Sid was caught up in it and Henry, to some extent. I was very fond of both of them. Again, I sort of kept my distance, and I think they resented the fact that I didn't support them strongly as they thought I should. I've always thought about Sid—Sid McMath was the most

[finest] man that I ever knew, a really fine man. Sid is really a first-class fellow—a hell of a lot of guts. He stood up on the race thing. And Henry, Henry was a . . .

RR: He was a Truman Democrat.

HA: Yes. Yes, that's another thing. Truman really kind of adopted Sid. Sid was a bright young returning veteran in that period. Old Truman got reelected. He was serving out Roosevelt's term and got reelected in 1948. So Sid sort of became a symbol for Truman. Truman came to Little Rock, I remember, when Sid was governor. I remember going out to the reception, a fairly small one, at the governor's mansion for Truman. By that time, Fulbright had made his statement about Truman being an overly educated—I mean, Truman made the statement about Fulbright being an over-educated son of a bitch. I never knew why this was. We had certainly supported Harry Truman. In fact, we had gone the last mile with him in the Dixiecrat campaign in 1948. I remember when I met him, he seemed very distant, and he seemed to think that the *Gazette* had not supported him. I wasn't sure enough about this to correct him and tell him that, but he somehow got this notion in his head, and I think it related to Fulbright. I think he somehow identified me with Fulbright. You know, Truman was a feuding man. I mean, he was a country boy who had real feuds with people. Everybody from the critic who insulted Margaret Truman—he was going to cut his balls off [laughs].

RR: You don't remember whether Orval turned up at that same reception, do you?

HA: He may very well have been there. In fact, I think it's almost certain that he was

because Orval had been in the same National Guard division, Truman's Thirty-fifth Division. I think Truman was there for a division reunion. I think that's what he was in town for, so I think it's quite likely that Orval was there. I don't remember. It was not an intimate thing, although it wasn't a great big reception.

RR: Talk to me a little bit more about this class business. You mentioned it a while ago, and how that affected Faubus's actions.

HA: Well, I'm full of it because I've been talking about it all morning with George Foley. That's sort of getting into the lint-head question and the thing that he's doing and how proper middle-class, city-type Southerner, and I guess I'm a fairly good example. You had a division between the, in our case in South Carolina, because we were surrounded by cotton mills, the rednecks were usually called lint heads, [and other whites]. These lint heads were the forced sharecroppers who had been forced off the land and came to work in the mills. There was really almost as sharp a distinction between them in the social sense as there was between whites and blacks. In some ways, it was even more so because we had a lot of interchange with blacks on a master-servant basis, where you knew a lot of them. You were socially segregated from the rednecks as a normal course of your existence if you lived in the city, as you were from blacks. I think there's a class consciousness that grew up mainly on the [inaudible] more contentious feeling on the other side. What we were doing was just ignoring [them]. It was not being actively hostile or trying to do them any kind of disservice. It was just that we treated them with a kind of contempt since they were semi-literate at best, and

they were poor and badly dressed, and they were not entirely attractive people. I think there's a lot of this that runs through this, and in Orval, it seemed to me, it became really compounded after he became governor, and then the showdown after Little Rock accentuated it. He had a case there about [inaudible]. The goddamn [Virgil] Blossom who was another—I supported Blossom and damn near strangled to do it. He was an ass, and the goddamn plan of his, which we did support because the school board was supporting it and [because] it was better than defiance anyway—but the notion of delaying [integration] so they could build a high school out in the goddamn [Pulaski] Heights that would be upper-middle-class white, and then the only integration would take place downtown, where the only whites in most of the places involved would be relatively poor folks. Orval rode that, and I think he rode it under some conviction. I think he felt that his people had been done wrong by this. Now, as everything else that Orval did, this is to some extent a rationalization of the fact that he had been pushed into the Citizens' Council by the white hierarchy and governor, Marvin Griffin. So I could never tell with Orval how much of it is genuine response and how much is [political calculation].

RR: There's no doubt in my mind that he did and still does have genuine class feelings.

HA: Oh, yes. I think that was ingrained in him probably by old man Sam. Except Sam was for all the poor folks, including the blacks.

RR: That's the big puzzle. Why couldn't Orval extend that class feeling to include the

poorest of the poor, the black people?

HA: I think the same reason that the original populists started out trying to do a fusion with the blacks and finally broke. It was a race feeling. I think it was probably more active among poor whites than it is among upper class. I'm not sure that the degree is any better morally on one side or the other, but upper-middle-class whites were generally secure enough in their social position that they didn't feel threatened by anybody. Whereas the lower class, the redneck types, felt threatened by almost everybody, including the blacks. The old sociological theory that they just [inherited] perceived wisdoms. That was the thing that W. J. Cash made too much of by saying that when you're down at the bottom on the white side, the only thing that you have left that makes you any better than the black is white skin. Otherwise, you're as poor as they are and as mistreated as they are. The only distinction is a man being white. Of course, in the cases of violence, when we had a lynching, the boss was almost entirely recruited from the poor whites. The more proper whites stood for law and order and deplored violence and so forth, there again, having nothing particularly to do with the fact that it was black and white [inaudible]. The whole thing was bad publicity, and it was distasteful. You would be unrespectable if you were caught in a lynch mob if you were a middle-class white. Whereas, if you were a redneck and had a reputation as being a hell of a fellow—I quoted that passage from Cash where he talks about the ambition of the fellow to gouge out an eyeball and drink a quart of whiskey straight and sit on his head in the bar and fight any man in the house.

That was the caricature of the redneck, the macho redneck. There's an element of truth in that theory. Those people are all around. You've run into them. They're really mean sons of bitches, and they're mean about everything, in particular about blacks.

RR: Yes. Did you know that Orval was going to call out the National Guard? Did you have any advanced warning of that?

HA: I think we had a little bit. I don't think they knew it until almost it had happened. He put them out there, as I remember, about 11:00 at night or something like that. They just appeared after dark at some time. We got some word. I don't think we knew it in time to have it in the paper until after it was a fact. I think it was the next day after they had arrived. Then there they were, surrounding the school.

RR: About that time he went on the air with a speech.

HA: Yes. We also learned over the weekend that Orval was going to defy—we knew that he was not going to—we assumed he was going to defy the court order in some fashion. I don't think we knew . . .

RR: What did you hear along that line? Do you remember any particulars?

HA: I was circulating around with Henry Woods and was in touch with Daisy—I mean with Ed—and was in touch with Daisy Bates and some of the politicians. I'm sure I talked to Henry. And Hugh Patterson was circulating around among the establishment types, people on the school board. He was talking with school board members, particularly Archie House, [who] was, of course, the school board attorney. He was our attorney and a very close and special friend of mine.

So we were picking up, I think, from various sources the knowledge that Orval was being recalcitrant. They were trying to get him to make a statement.

RR: The school board was?

HA: Right. Then we also knew that the fire chief had pulled out and was not going to support the city police. The chief of police was . . .

RR: Marvin Potts.

HA: Yes. There was some question about whether they would be able to hold. Then whether or not Orval would provide them a backup was another thing. You had to begin to assume that he was not going to do that, so that's the kind of stuff we were [thinking], coming in. I don't think, as I say, until he actually put the [National] Guard out there that we knew that was going to be the move he made, but it was clear that he was going to defy the courts.

RR: I thought you might have gotten some wind from one of Orval's own people. Are you aware that he had a meeting of all his department heads on Saturday, the last Saturday morning before school opened?

HA: Did he announce this?

RR: No, he just went around the table and asked each one of them for his advice on what he should do about the opening of the schools.

HA: We probably knew about that, but I don't think that it indicated . . .

RR: It was a private meeting.

HA: Well, we may have gotten some word about that, but as I said, we knew there was maneuvering going on. I remember at some point—I've forgotten

when—Winthrop Rockefeller came down from the mountain and pleaded with him.

RR: Yes, tried to talk to him.

HA: I think we knew about that, but he came away saying that he couldn't sway Orval.

RR: Yes. That would have been a likely source.

HA: Right. I'm sure we had that, and I think we had from Archie House—see, the school board was trying their damndest to get Orval. They had a lot of meetings with Orval. Archie told us—and this, I think, is quite [likely]—he said that Orval came in and pleaded with the school board to go back to court on the basis of his false information and ask for a stay because there would be violence. The school board refused to go along with it, and Archie said, “There are no circumstances under which I will take this school board back into that federal court and ask for a delay.” Orval said at the end of the meeting, “Well, you're going to get a court order anyway.” That's when he went into the state courts with that maneuver with the chancery judge. Archie was just absolutely outraged by that. He ran into that damn judge . . .

RR: Murray Reed?

HA: Yes, Murray Reed. Archie lived out in the Heights. I think he said he stopped in some restaurant for supper that night out in the Heights, one of those places around the station up there, and Murray Reed was in there. He went over and just chewed his ass out. It was [the most] goddamn outrageous thing he had ever heard. I think our sources I mentioned were enough to tell us that something was

going to happen because Orval was resisting all efforts that everybody was making right up to the end. I remember asking Hugh if he thought that I should go out and try to talk to Orval, and Hugh said “No, let’s don’t touch the son of a bitch. You don’t want to get compromised with whatever he’s going to do.” I said, “Maybe I’ve got enough call on him.” I was thinking about having saved his ass, that he would be willing to take my call at that stage if he would do it. I think Hugh was right. I didn’t argue with him. He just said no.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 1, Side 2]

HA: I don’t know whether Sid talked to him at that time. If he did, it didn’t make any difference.

RR: Yes. Brooks Hays, in the book that he wrote in which he explains all this, has an interesting little—he says that at some point while he and Faubus and [Dwight D.] Eisenhower and Sherman Adams were all going around and were talking, that Faubus—Faubus’s pitch during this time was to delay, to find some way to put it off.

HA: That’s right.

RR: In the middle of making one of those pitches, he said, “I don’t agree with the way Virgil Blossom is going about this. Let’s delay it, and rather than start at the high school, start with the first grade.” Since then I’ve run into any number of people who said, “Well, that would have been the more sensible way to integrate the schools.” Had you ever heard that Orval went so far as to say, “Okay, I can go for

integration if they would just start with the first grade”?

HA: I'm not surprised that he would have said that to Brooks Hays. I was very fond of Brooks, but Brooks was absolutely the worst possible person that could have been selected to try to be the go-between. Brooks, after all those years in office, was still naive and was just taken in by Orval. Well, Brooks said in the book—he said it other places—that all he was trying to do was to keep Orval from being pushed into the hands of the adamant people of the Citizens' Council, into the adamant company of the resistant Southern governors. Well, the son of a bitch was already there, and that was what the problem was. It wasn't a matter of pushing. Marvin Griffin and these folks had sold him this interposition package, and so once he had gotten in there, there was really no way he could get out of it. Now, Eisenhower was such a goddamn dunderhead—the report that has come out of there on various people who were present, including [U.S. Attorney General Herbert] Brownell, which I have read—Brooks says that when he and Orval were flying up there to Newport, that he—I'm quoting Brooks because, clearly, I wasn't there—he said that he had concluded that all Orval wanted was delay, and that seemed quite reasonable to him. So he was willing to see what could be done about that. They get up there, and they put this damn proposition for delay to Eisenhower, and according to various accounts, I think including Brownell, Eisenhower thought that was reasonable enough. I mean, “Maybe we can give him a little more time and maybe . . .” Well, at that point Brownell spoke up and explained, “You have to understand this is not in the province of the executive

any longer. This is in the courts. The court has already issued an order. The court gave the school board three years to perfect a plan. They have a plan to admit nine children in one school, and they have been allowed another six years to complete any further integration.” And he said—and I’m sure this is a quote, either direct or indirect, from Brownell—he said you couldn’t have an order with any less than that that wouldn’t violate the basic precept. I mean, this is about as minimum a court order as anybody could conceive. So then Eisenhower agreed, and so Orval agreed, and all that business. That’s really a fantastic thing. Apparently, he’s always said that Brownell wrote the statement that he issued. That’s when he said, “Just because I said it doesn’t make it so. They insisted I had to do that.”

RR: Do you have any inside knowledge of Brownell and his—let me back up. There’s an interesting book some young academic wrote about the justice department, and . . .

HA: Oh, *Simple Justice: The Cool Revolt?*

RR: No, it’s a different one. It’s the one that’s never been published by—it’s in kind of a flimsy cover. It is called something like *Justice Department and School Desegregation*, but it’s mainly an account of the Brownell years. He talks about Brownell. He paints Brownell and his assistant, A. B. Caldwell, the Arkansas fellow, as being gung ho for civil rights and having to fight not only the Democrats, but Eisenhower and the whole Eisenhower White House. He says that at some point Brownell actually deceived the White House. In a hearing

before either the House or the Senate, he made a public statement that put the Eisenhower administration on record as being in favor of the 1957 Civil Rights Act—unknown to the White House. They couldn't afford to second-guess him, so they were hooked. Have you ever heard that?

HA: Yes, that certainly jibes with everything I have heard. I don't think Brownell was a passionate advocate of civil rights, but I think he accepted as a lawyer—and he was a pretty good lawyer—that this was a correct decision and the president should support it. Now, [J. Edgar] Hoover has some interesting indications about this, too. The Justice Department, through the Solicitor General, argued the case, the *Brown* case, before the Supreme Court, along with the other people who were a party to the action. Eisenhower was trying to get the Justice Department to support continuing *Plessy*, to try to keep *Plessy* from being reversed. Brownell was resisting this. He couldn't go before the court and take a completely opposite position. The Solicitor General, who actually did the arguing, is quoted by Hoover as saying this was a hell of an issue within the Justice Department. All lawyers over there pretty much at that time thought the damn decision was correct and should be carried out. Eisenhower was just dragging his feet in every direction. I don't know what the rest of the people around the White House—well, they were just sycophants doing what Eisenhower—they knew what Eisenhower wanted. I don't think there's any question that that's the case. Now, how far Brownell went, I don't think anybody knows. It's entirely possible that—in fact, I think probably the record would show that—the Justice

Department was really on the record supporting that decision when Eisenhower clearly was not. Eisenhower then fell back on simply being mute, refusing to say anything. He wouldn't say whether he thought it was right or how long it ought to go on.

RR: Brownell, of course, was very much interested in the fortunes of the national Republican Party.

HA: Well, that's right.

RR: It's a little hard for me to understand the purely political impact of what he was trying to do for civil rights. In light of what has happened since, when they moved to the right, why would Brownell have wanted to make a play for the black vote in the 1950s?

HA: Because the blacks had gone to the Democrats and they [Republicans] wanted to split, particularly in the North, where the support of civil rights got black votes and didn't lose any white votes—effectively speaking, I mean. This was generally true. Whereas in the South if you could make the Democrats leave, turn their backs on civil rights, [which] a lot of the goddamn resistance people were doing, that would piss off blacks, and the blacks would come around and vote Republican again. They're traditionally drawn—see, the blacks didn't begin voting Democratic—the ones in the South weren't voting at all—until [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt.

RR: Of course, it didn't help any.

HA: Roosevelt didn't get them in the first election [1932]. He didn't get them until the

second [1936].

RR: Anyway, it didn't work, and the blacks stayed with the Democrats.

HA: That's right. They did. That's mainly because Truman had really brought them in, and Truman was the civil rights program, you know. The desegregation of the military had really submitted the blacks—I mean, they were beginning to vote in the South in sufficient numbers to make some difference. See, the voting rights—the Supreme Court decision that abolished the white primary, it was handed down in the middle of World War II. It predated all this. So they had begun to vote, not in any great number, but they were voting in Little Rock. There was enough black vote in Little Rock that politicians in a local race had to deal with it.

RR: Then along comes Little Rock, and Ike sends in the federal troops. How much did that hurt Republicans in the 1960 presidential election?

HA: Oh, I don't think it necessarily hurt them. You see—or perhaps it did. It put all the blacks solidly—no, no, it didn't. I mean, [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy had a hell of a problem keeping the blacks.

RR: [Richard Milhouse] Nixon was pretty friendly with them.

HA: Yes, that's right. Nixon had no position on this, but he had gone along with wooing blacks. He talked a pretty good game. I'm sure that he would have been more outspoken had it not been for Eisenhower. I mean, I think he's an idiot. Then Kennedy made the great grandstand play with Martin Luther King, [Jr.], and that really turned around—he had some very smart blacks operating for him in

Harlem, and he got all of the black leadership as a result of that King thing. As a matter of fact, the black vote—there's an analysis that shows the black vote actually elected him. He couldn't have gotten enough electoral votes without it. If he had lost three states like Ohio, Illinois—I think the loss of those two alone would have defeated him.

RR: I really had in mind what happened in the South in the 1960 election, when—I believe it was when the Republicans were beginning to have a chance to carry southern states, and this pretty well cooked it for them when Ike sent the troops down here to enforce integration.

HA: Well, again, because of the white reaction.

RR: That's what I'm talking about.

HA: Yes, right. See, the goddamn Republicans—Ike had carried these southern states in the presidential election. Adlai [Stevenson], in 1956, had won only two or three.

RR: And then in 1960, Nixon slipped back.

HA: That's right, he did. I think in part it was a white reaction against Ike, against the troops.

RR: I was wondering whether that would have been enough to make the difference in the electoral votes nationally.

HA: Well, in 1960, I don't know. I just looked at those figures not long ago. I went back and—do you have Arthur Schlesinger's book on Kennedy, *A Thousand Days*?

RR: Yes.

HA: He's got quite a bit on that, on the kind of voting and balloting. Take a look at it.

It's easy to find.

RR: Okay. There's a new book that goes into some of this by the brothers Earl and Merle Black, political scientists about the solid Republican South and their analysis of it.

HA: Sorenson had a good deal about it, too, in his book on Kennedy.

RR: Let me go back a ways.

HA: Let me just back up a minute and make a point. I was in the 1952 campaign and the 1956 campaign with Stevenson—only sort of lightly in 1952. I was always accused of doing his southern speeches [when he] made a tour through the South. That was before *Brown*, and so for that race, race wasn't really an issue of any great consequence. The line wasn't drawn. Adlai had an excellent civil rights record as a lawyer and as a governor, and had been an outspoken [proponent of civil rights]. He had supported Hubert Humphrey in 1948, as a delegate to the convention, when Hubert Humphrey stepped out of the darkness of states' rights and into the sunshine of human rights, and all that kind of thing. Adlai had the support of the Democratic machine in Illinois, which the blacks were solidly in, so he was all right with the blacks in 1952. Race just really wasn't an issue. Ike, of course, didn't respond—I'm talking about issues. He just waved and smiled and reassured people. In 1956, when we made the second run, it [race] was an absolutely critical issue, and it had a lot to do with defeating Stevenson. After the

Supreme Court ruled, you couldn't dodge it anymore. The big-city bosses, to protect the black vote—Averell Harriman—incidentally, I just saw a review of a biography of Averell Harriman, and a lot of stuff is in it. Harriman came in. He didn't run in the primaries, but he had Truman's backing. Truman was pissed off at Stevenson.

RR: Is this Rudy Abramson's book?

HA: Yes.

RR: I didn't know it had been published.

HA: It hasn't been. It's being published right now. I got a proof, a manuscript copy, from the *Chicago Tribune*. I did some reviewing for them. I think the book is due to be published probably just about now. I was a little late because I went off to China just after I got it, and I didn't get it read until I got back. In any case, Harriman made a great play, and he had the glandular liberals, Arthur Schlesinger and all those people. Almost all of them were in our camp. Well, he was a great hero. He wanted to be seen to be tougher. He wanted to go all out on this. Stevenson refused to do it. Stevenson took the position—the issue got framed in terms of Adam Clayton Powell. [Powell] introduced an amendment of—he would amend every bill that came through that required that states—any form of federal aid, not just federal aid to education—that federal aid would be withheld from any state that was in defiance of the Supreme Court, or any school district. There was no way to get—they were trying and Stevenson always supported [civil rights]. Hubert Humphrey was leading the fight for federal aid to education.

There wasn't practically any, and the schools badly needed it. So every time they'd try to get a federal aid bill, old Powell over in the House was a—you couldn't get it out of the House without Powell's amendment. With Powell's amendment, you couldn't get it through the Senate, so it was an absolute dead fall. Stevenson took the position that—it was the moderate position, which has never been tolerable anyway—he said we needed both. We need the civil rights bill, [and] we need to desegregate the schools, and we need to get federal aid. They will need all the help they can get. To put these two things together was to defeat the real purpose because in the end [passing them was impossible]. Then he would urge audiences not to be too hard on the South. He could do this—I remember him making a speech in Seattle—hell, Seattle at that time didn't have any blacks. So he would talk of this to them and say it's all right to approve in principle, but you have got to take into account that these people down there have a real problem. They need time. They need support. They need all the help they can get. I remember going—it was the first time I had been up and down the West Coast. I flew into San Francisco with Stevenson, and a guy named Williamson was there [from] the local NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. I later got to be pretty good friends with him. He grabbed me as soon as we got there. I was supposed to be the civil rights advisor to Stevenson, and he had already taken this position before I had ever joined up, and I did—well, I thought he was right. I thought he couldn't—furthermore, we had the practical problem—we had to carry the

goddamn primary in Florida, as well as California. So you were damned if you—and running against [Estes] Kefauver. Kefauver had beat us in Minnesota. Well, Kefauver had a weaker position on civil rights than Adlai did, but he looked like a populist. These glandular people up in Minnesota, the Hubert Humphrey types, again, they had no blacks in Minnesota at that time. So this was a great issue for them. Hell, anybody was for civil rights. Franklin Williamson—I remember the first conversation. He said, “Now, Stevenson, let’s get this clear.” He said, “Stevenson has got to support all of our members. He has got to support every kind of action that will force compliance in the South, and if he doesn’t do that, the blacks are not going to vote for him, [and] the NAACP cannot support him.” Well, at that time I knew that actually there weren’t enough black votes to make a difference in the California primary, and, in any case, I doubted seriously if Franklin Williamson could really deliver. It was, to some extent, an empty threat, except the worst part of it was the goddamn young white liberals in California, the Democratic Club, as they called it. This was a litmus test issue for them. They were the ones we had to worry about. There was absolutely no placating [them]. This was kind of like PC [political correctness] is now. Adlai kept trying to be moderate, and it was touch and go. We won the last two primaries, which came almost together, Florida and California. We were in a deadlock with Kefauver until then. We carried both Florida and California. You talk about some artful dodging. In Florida we were getting everything. You had all this Jewish community down south, where it was pretty hot for civil rights.

You had the redneck counties up in the upper part of the state. They were just like south Georgia. So trying to get through that was a [nightmare].

RR: You are from a part of the South, yourself, not known for its liberalism.

Greenville [South Carolina] was that your hometown?

HA: Yes. No, it certainly wasn't [known for its liberalism]. South Carolina is basically conservative, but the upcountry in South Carolina wasn't really any different from the North. This was not an attitude of be all, live all. You couldn't be for any kind of social integration, but you could stand for justice for blacks without being thrown out of the community and losing respectability. When I went to Charlotte after the war—and Charlotte's view is much the same situation—we campaigned for voting rights for blacks. I mean, the courts had already moved. This was the big thing, and of course—[Note: long gap in tape] for or against it. And that's when the massive resistance business [came] on the South, and it dwindled down into Alabama and even Georgia. It was not very strong there. The upper South began peeling off and complying. That was the pattern that developed. When Martin Luther King started his drive in public accommodations that succeeded, and desegregation began to the extent that it had ever existed in the schools. Again, there's a pattern in this. The court originally—I think my book has something to do with this, arguing—Earl Warren told me that the “all deliberate speed” clause (that is an oxymoron) was an indication of a court which did not want to recognize that community attitudes should be and must be taken into account, but wanted to have the latitude amount

for a district judge to recognize that there was a hell of a lot of difference between desegregating Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Blytheville, for example. So they wanted—they didn't want to put any time limits, so they fashioned the ruling so it was generally interpreted that instead of saying that as conducted it should accomplish so much desegregation or any kind of formula or portion of population, they said the test of compliance will be good faith. And if the judge believes the district is moving in good faith to accomplish the objective, then they don't have to crack down. Well, the trouble was that the good faith was in damn short supply. Everybody dragged their feet. For ten years they did the absolute minimum, which is what happened in Little Rock. Until that Mecklenberg case, Charlotte was one of them. The court then said that deliberate speed no longer applied: "You will put these school districts together immediately. You will eliminate all existing districts, and you will use busing." They used busing in order to get children back and forth. Well, that blew the lid. I mean, really. Desegregation began to move very rapidly across the South with resistance yet to come. The other thing it did, which I'm not even sure the court quite understood at the time they did that, [was] move the goddamn thing into the North because it no longer made a distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* segregation. In fact, it specifically said that *de facto* segregation is in violation. That put the shit in the fan in places like Boston and New York and Los Angeles.

RR: I wrote a few stories at *The [New York] Times* about the quandary in California and that kind of thing. They were up against it.

HA: Right. Of course, there hadn't been any real desegregation outside the South.

RR: Harry, how did you become a liberal?

HA: I don't know that I am a liberal. I'm a moderate. I'm a fucking immoderate moderate [laughs]. No, I think I've just been writing about this [inaudible].

Growing up in South Carolina, I think the South has always had—the stereotype has never been a perfect fit. I'd say that there was always in the South a substantial number of white people who believed in justice for blacks and who believed in fairness for blacks. That didn't mean that they wanted them to marry their daughter or support social integration. Mr. [J. N.] Heiskell was an interesting case. The old man was a real civil libertarian. He was a real free speech man. He didn't want them to be shut up, and he certainly didn't want anybody lynched. He didn't want it to become violent. Well, I think Mr. Heiskell was one in his generation who believed that, certainly, that blacks should be treated fairly and be treated decently. This was a part of the gentlemanly tradition. He didn't consider segregation either desirable or necessary. He was able to convince himself that you could achieve racial justice, social justice, within the limits of a segregated society. I suppose I started out accepting that proposition pretty much, too.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

HA: I had become, by the time I got to Harvard, convinced in my own mind that this old segregated pattern would not hold much longer. I didn't know how it was

going to end, but the demography was changing so rapidly. The cultural standards were changing. The old segregation society depended on being isolated, and it wasn't any longer. Everybody was moving around, and people were moving off the farms to the city. The courses I took up at Harvard were really intended to explore, as best I could with people up there, what kind of changes to expect. I was determined to go back to the South, and I thought—I was correct in this—[that] this was going to be the biggest goddamn story. If I'm going to stay in the news business, it's coming. It might not be right here yet. Of course, shortly after the war, Truman came out with that Civil Rights Commission report, and that really put the shit in the fan. Well, then I got back from Europe at the end of the war in Europe and was ordered back to the Pentagon, where I was stationed between Europe and Japan. They sent me back to Washington, and I reported to the Pentagon. Nobody ever heard of me, and they couldn't remember who the hell had issued the orders to bring me back or what I was going to do. So they said, "You're entitled to rest and recreation. You can take three weeks and then come back. By that time we can figure out why you were ordered back from Europe." So I went up—my wife was staying with her family. I picked her up. Now, this was the spring, [and] it really wasn't warm enough to do it, but I was really [fed] up, so we went out to Nantucket, which was a little out of season. The place was practically deserted because the summer was over. My wife still talks about this. She was pissed off. I picked up—I guess in Washington on my way to pick her up, or maybe Boston, but I bought the two-volume [Gunnar]

Myrdal report, the great, big, fat Myrdal report . . .

RR: *American Dilemma*?

HA: *American Dilemma*. I took the goddamn thing out to Nantucket [and] spent my rest and recreation two weeks reading *American Dilemma*, which confirmed a lot of notions that I already had and did convince me that this system was not to endure. By the time I got out of the army and went back to Charlotte, which I did directly and then went back to Greenville, I became editor of the *Charlotte News*. I succeeded W. J. Cash there. He had been the editorial page editor before. He was dead by that time. I never knew him. The *News* was an enlightened paper. Again, you could stand for justice. You could stand for gold supply. You could fight for improved schools for blacks—not desegregating them, but better teachers’ pay and all that kind of thing, and generally improving the standards for blacks. We cracked down on police abuse cases and clear cases of miscarriage in court, and that kind of thing. I think we had a general approbation list, and there was a hell of a lot of people who didn’t like it. They considered us as kind of a half-ass liberal, but at least you weren’t unrespectable. If you crossed the line in anything that they called social intermingling of the races, that was absolutely taboo, and you would either have to leave the South or shut up.

RR: Did you have any black friends up to that point?

HA: Not really in that sense. I had grown up around a lot of blacks within the master-servant relationship.

RR: I remember the story you told about your boyhood friend.

HA: Blacks would do my—I had casual contacts with several people like that. I think we were friendly enough. I certainly wouldn't call them my friends, and I certainly didn't have any social contacts except to the extent that sometimes I would speak at the black college or something like that.

RR: In the army you didn't have any . . .

HA: Well, I've said that it's a remarkable experience. When I got in the army, I went down to [Fort] Benning [Georgia]. I already had a commission as a second lieutenant, and they retreaded me, and I was assigned to the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which didn't exist. It was just being formed out of Austin, Texas. We were taking draftees right in from the reception centers and built this goddamn army up and trained it under civilians—fifteen thousand men, all white. Now, they were from all over the country, and they were all—there were Jews, and we had all kind of ethnic mix, everything but black. I realized for the first time in my life I was in a place where there weren't any blacks. I was completely separated from them. The army at that time was still totally segregated although they had opened up a little bit for black officers. They had segregated all the black units and, as a matter of fact, they kept the black units as far away from the white units as they could. I was never on a base in which there was a black unit, so I was about as well sealed away for all the training period.

RR: You were getting a taste there of what Orval Faubus grew up with.

HA: Right. That's right, exactly.

RR: I see this as an interesting difference between your background and his. You'd

been around black people all your life.

HA: That's right. I think it is a difference. I think there's a real distinction. I think it's a difference that you will find among the low-country people and the up-country people. You will find a certain level of tolerance even among the most conservative of the old plantation types. They really had been—they knew blacks, and they were fond of blacks in many cases. It wasn't just an act. I mean it was a . . .

RR: You were an up-country person?

HA: I was an up-country person. We had—again, this is something that is very unique among Southerners. My father owned a shoe store, and we were moderately prosperous. We were middle class, middle income. Because blacks—I guess Greenville is about twenty percent black—blacks had been shoved off the land just like the rednecks. The rednecks had become rent hands. They worked the cotton, and the blacks did whatever they could, which was the menial work. They all lived damn near on subsistence wages, which meant that even a moderately prosperous family would have a cook and a maid and a yard man and have a washwoman. You would have all these blacks that you dealt with day to day, a level of servants that a person with a comparable income in a city in the North would never have a servant at all. Everybody had servants because you could get them for two or three dollars a week in total. So you had not only contacts with blacks, you couldn't avoid it. In fact, you were surrounded by them. You were dealing with them every day. I had a nurse when I was small, and we had a cook

always, a black cook, and then the washwoman would come once a week and wash in the backyard.

RR: Of course, at some point you obviously went from, in your mind, the stage where these were people that you understood to be inferior to some other understanding.

HA: That's right.

RR: I wonder when that happened.

HA: I don't think it was, you know, on the road to Damascus. I didn't have that. I never thought of myself as conducting any kind of particular crusade of my own for downtrodden blacks. Rather, I considered myself, as I sometimes said, in a position after I became an editor of a man who was trying to preserve order in an incipient riot—that was the thing to do—and trying to keep the lines opened between the races.

RR: Some people say that the enlightenment came during the college years. That happened to me, for example. You went to Clemson, didn't you?

HA: I want to tell you, you talk about being sealed away. In the first place, you're out there in the country. Secondly, Clemson's campus is the former plantation of John C. Calhoun, and the founding father was Governor Pitchfork Ben Tillman, who actually set the damn thing up. The land was left by Clemson, who was John Calhoun's son-in-law and who had inherited the plantation. He was a gentleman farmer and also an agricultural expert. He left the plantation to the state to found the A & M college. The land grant colleges came along about this time. It's funny. It's unlike the other state universities [inaudible] people, original private

subsidy required by Clemson, and then when one of them died, they named his successor. The other half are appointed by the governor. In every way, Pitchfork Ben Tillman was sort of the founding father, and the main building was called Tillman Hall. Then the most distinguished graduate ahead of me was Strom Thurmond, so Harvard thinks that I was in a hotbed of insurrection.

RR: Yes, I see what you're saying.

HA: Well, actually, I thought about it a great deal. One of the things that's so striking when I think back—because I went there in 1933, which was just—I was actually in college when Roosevelt took office and launched the New Deal, and the recession was absolute. My father had been bankrupted, and I was absolutely flat damn broke. I had to work my way through, as almost everybody did, and the class was very small because the Depression was really—and then comes along all this political ferment the years that I'm in college: the New Deal, the Thousand Days, and all that horseshit. So we were very conscious of this. We were very conscious of the political ferment and change. I don't recall that the race question entered into our thinking about this at all. You know, we would talk about these [things]. I don't think anybody recognized that a part of what was happening was going to force the issue. I think everybody grew up—probably you did, too, although you came along later enough, so it would be somewhat different—but I think we just assumed this was the ordained way it was. It was like God had ordered it, and nobody ever questioned it. I mean, this was the segregation, the way it was, and so I didn't begin to question it until after

I had got out of college and began to work on the newspaper and covering meetings. I began to see firsthand the injustice around the courts.

RR: Was that at the *Greenville News*?

HA: Yes, *Piedmont* first, the afternoon paper. I covered the police beat for a while. When you get a look at it there—I've seen them be totally insensitive, and you have to recognize the unfairness and the injustice of the system. I didn't begin to rebel against it, but I began to be conscious of it where I hadn't been before. Then I went on and covered politics. I got transferred to the *News In the Morning*, and I went down to Columbia and covered the legislature. By this time, I was there when Roosevelt tried to purge goddamn Smith. So these old Dixiecrats were coming under fire, and, again, race was really not an issue unless they raised it, and they raised it purely as a diversion. Roosevelt for the first three terms didn't consider race. They didn't consider desegregation a question. This was simply not an issue until the war years and the pressure began on Roosevelt—the threatened march on Washington. They demanded more officer training for blacks although they were segregated units.

RR: What year were you at Nieman?

HA: I was there in 1941 and 1942. I was there at the time of Pearl Harbor. I didn't finish the year.

RR: You had clearly begun to think about the race issue by then.

HA: Oh, yes, I had thought about it a great deal. As a matter of fact, I had been writing politics. I had been through some political campaigns. By that time I was

convinced—as I say, I had also spent enough time in the North to know something about—I had gone up and done a series on the “Deep North,” comparing the working-class people. This was some of the history [inaudible] because the unions and the northern press were attacking the terrible conditions in the cotton mills in the South because all the cotton mills were moving South, and New England money—I saw the awareness of this was upon me, and, I say again, I never thought that I was actively out there crusading for change. It was rather that I thought change was going to take place, and I wanted to prepare myself to deal with it. I knew damn well that any newspaper editor or newspaper reporter in the political heart of the South was not going to escape this question very long. I could see it was bound to come.

RR: How much did being a newspaper editor have to do with forcing you to think about the race issue?

HA: Oh, I think it had a great deal to do with it. I think that I simply—yes, the main thing is if you started out and you were doing the routine reporting, the kind of things you got assigned—and you got most of them—you couldn’t have escaped seeing what they were all about. You go out to cover those recorders’ court in the police station, and see the way blacks were handled, and deal with the cops and people like that. I knew some good cops and some bad cops, but they didn’t treat blacks as fully human beings. I mean, they just simply didn’t. I think that you get out of that an exposure that most people don’t. Most people, ordinary citizens, growing up middle-class citizens in the South, are not exposed [to the

injustice]. The only blacks that they see are their own servants, and the only thing they say is what they want to hear.

RR: Yes. This question of how people had their eyes opened on the race . . .

HA: What about yourself?

RR: In college at the University of Missouri in a series of late night, terrible, angry quarrels that I had with my roommate.

HA: When was that? When did you go to college?

RR: After the war, 1947. I had a roommate from New York, who was determined to convince me that I was wrong, and he finally did. I don't know how it happened. Nearly everybody can tell some kind of a story about [that], but Orval never had this.

HA: No, he didn't. He was just about as sealed away—and the other thing I've said about Orval—I don't remember now whether I wrote this or not, but I think another big factor in this is that Orval came back from the war, where he had a pretty good record. He was a captain and got some kind of medal, I guess. Orval—that was a pretty high cotton experience for him, and he had been a man of some substance, an officer, gentleman, and whatever. He comes back up there to the country and runs a piss-ass newspaper and barely makes a living, and then being postmaster or whatever. It's [a] pretty miserable existence for him when he plunged back into that. Then Sid brings him down, as he said, [and] built the first paved road and let him out, and he [comes] down to Little Rock. Then he finally gets into politics. He's got a lot of charm and so forth, and gets elected governor.

He's somebody except that he finds that a lot of people are not taking him as seriously as they should be taking him. Then he comes up with the third-term question, and either he has to get a third term or he has no career to go back to. He never had a career. Usually, a governor is a lawyer or something, [and] he goes off and practices law. Orval had no skills. He wasn't going back up into Madison County to run the goddamn weekly newspaper after being governor. So, in that sense, I think that was the driving force to make him [run again]. Then once he decided he had to do that, he recognized that he had to get the segregation [issue] built up to the point where he couldn't avoid it [race] as he had done in his second election, when he won against Jim Johnson. He toe-danced all around it and introduced it a little bit.

RR: At that point, if he had had the emotional commitment to racial justice that you had developed down through the years, I don't see how he could have done what he did.

HA: Oh, he couldn't have. I think that what he would have had to do . . .

RR: He was liberal enough, but he didn't have that deep [conviction].

HA: Yes, that's right. Of course, we will never know. That was a great difference I had with [J. William] Fulbright. When you look now, with the benefit of hindsight, at how many Southern governors did survive by, at least, taking a moderate, law-and-order stand. [They] stopped short of actual defiance, you know, [and] they could say, "Well, they're making us do it." They could blame it all on the Supreme Court. They could take a position as was done in Tennessee,

and you see Estes Kefauver was a good example of that.

RR: Luther Hodges.

HA: Luther Hodges, of North Carolina. Virginia was different because of Harry Byrd.

But, in any case, the Deep South—I think you had to assume that the governor of Mississippi and the governor of Alabama were going to have to holler defiance, and they could probably not stand the citizen councils and so forth. Certainly, it could be done in Arkansas, and, as a matter of fact, if you look back on it, Orval did that when he ran against Jim Johnson in the second race [1956]. Jim Johnson was out there, firebrand [and all that] horseshit. Orval beat the piss out of him. Now, the situation had changed by the time he got up to—it had come home, in that desegregation was going to happen. Before that it had just been a threat, but Little Rock was [now] going to begin to desegregate. So Orval sort of had the issue forced on him to the point where he had to do something. He either had to support the school board or defy it. He couldn't get elected, he thought, and maybe he may have been right, if he had taken the law-and-order stance. You know, when the court's decision first came down, he made about as moderate a statement of support of the court as anybody ever made in the South, saying that he believed—and he talked about [how] Arkansas always had excellent race relations and was sure we could work this out.

RR: Going on the assumption that in September of 1957, it was too late for him to do the right thing and still get re-elected, what might he have done earlier in ways of leadership of his state to get around this and still win a third term?

HA: I'm not sure he could have won a third term without the race issue. I'm not at all sure. That was his judgment, and I'm not sure he wasn't right under the circumstances. I have to think what you're saying is that if he had any degree of the conviction that I had, and I expect you had, he couldn't have [run]. He'd have just to either not run or take his chances.

RR: Well, take a guy like Luther Hodges. As I recall, Hodges would find ways over and over and over to speak out on the issues, saying, "Now, folks, this is not popular, but we must do the right thing," and that kind of thing. I don't remember Orval doing that. Now, you say in 1954, he did.

HA: He made one statement, and I've never found anything after that. I guess it was when it first came down, and I don't know. I look at that statement even now and think that maybe I wrote it, but I know I didn't. It was a "simply be calm, and we are sure that we are going to comply. This is the law of the land."

RR: What if he had gone on with that line? You know, he made a lot of speeches. What if he had worked something like that into some of his speeches?

HA: I think he could have made it. I think he could have done what some of those other Upper South governors did. He had had an opportunity to support that smoking school board. They announced immediately that they were going to comply. If he had been taken a position that was supporting the school board, and it was a local matter, he was not going to intervene. But he called on all people of good will to avoid strife and whatever, which is what some of the other Southern governors did.

RR: Of course, all the time he's got Jim Johnson nipping at his heels.

HA: That's right.

RR: The secret is how to isolate Johnson.

HA: They all did, and I don't know how popular Jim was because you take the evidence of the last race, which was against Orval, [and] Orval beat him about two to one or more, I think. You assume that represented Jim's fate, but I suppose the contrary argument would be that the fever had gone up a great deal in the two years after that. Again, there was a time when nothing was happening. Everything was in suspense. You knew it was going to happen, but it hadn't happened yet. So I think most people faced what was for most of them a very unpleasant prospect at best. They didn't want to do it, and they just didn't think about it. It wasn't happening, and maybe it won't, or [maybe] something will happen. I think it was after it ended, and by the time it got involved in the next election, it couldn't be avoided. I mean it had happened. Little Rock was going to let "some niggers" in the schools. Hoxie had already done it. Fayetteville had already done it.

RR: What were you doing at the *Gazette* during this period, 1954 to 1957?

HA: I think what we were doing, and to some extent consciously, was trying to prepare our readers to face the fact that there was going to be change, and that it was going to happen in any case, and get ready for it. It was probably a good thing. We were not talking so much about social justice. I've said, and I think [you] would agree with me, if you look at places in the South that had newspapers that

took the position the *Gazette* did when the showdown came, as in Louisville, Nashville, and most of the North Carolina cities, you would find that it wasn't so much what they said when the thing happened as what they'd been saying before. They had been consciously trying to prepare public opinion that this was not the end of the world, that it wasn't going to mean your daughter would have to get married to a "nigger" tomorrow morning. So I think we were trying to do that. Also, see, we were very strong supporters of Harry Truman in the Dixiecrat rebellion [of 1948]. We led the fight against the Dixiecrats. Ben Laney was the governor, and I actually debated Ben Laney on a statewide network, and we were arguing party loyalty. "For God's sake, let's don't split the party on this issue if it split with the civil rights report from the commission of Truman's." Truman hadn't done anything about it yet. So, beginning then, we were arguing party loyalty. We were arguing about this change [and that] the South can't secede again. This was happening and a great majority of people obviously opposed contingent segregation. They may not have anybody to segregate, but that's going to be the national policy. So we would argue. All the political kinds of arguments we were making were following that line. I think it did have some effect.

RR: Here in Arkansas, we had the leading paper, a paper of enormous influence, taking this reasonable stand, and saying, "Get ready for this." We had a governor whose inclination was probably along the same lines, but who essentially kept silent. Now, I'm tempted to believe that if the governor had joined the *Gazette*

and added his voice . . .

HA: I think that's possible. I think that's possible. I don't think we can guarantee it, and I think that Orval, whether right or wrong, made his decision essentially on his reading of the political situation, that he couldn't be elected for a third term. He had the third term tradition to overcome, and that actually [inaudible] Sid McMath.

RR: Why do you think Orval failed to do this from the beginning? I'm talking about from mid-1955, right on. Why didn't he have the vision to . . .?

HA: I think he had a sort of vacillating nature, and he didn't—I don't think Orval was ever disposed to move ahead of the curve, and there wasn't anything requiring him to take it. He could just sort of stay out of it. He issued this one statement, and it wasn't any cause until the Citizens' Council got very active, and then they began working on him in this term of the legislature in Little Rock. He put in all these damn sovereignty commissions with silly preparedness legislation—the interposition. Orval actually opposed some of that stuff. When he knew he couldn't hold the legislature, he went along with it.

RR: He's got an indecisive streak in him.

HA: Oh, he has. It's weakness really. I'm quoted in a Bob Sherrill statement about him. I need to remember that. Bob Sherrill wrote a book called . . .

RR: *Gothic Politics*.

HA: Yes, *Gothic Politics*. He describes Orval as [having] a basic weakness that yields to the latest and heaviest pressure when it really—and this would seem to me to

be born out by the fact that he was already a good little—what the hell he had gone through. I think when Roy Harris and Marvin Griffin came in there and leaned on him. They pushed him around. They already had this whole goddamn interposition thing worked out, this phony crap that Jack Kilpatrick was publicizing in *The New Leader*. All this preparedness legislation was intended to implement it, to make ready, and to make the use of police powers on the grounds that there was supposed to be a lot of unrest. I think they pushed on Orval, and they leaned on him real hard.

RR: Do you have any first hand or even indirect knowledge or hearsay or any kind of evidence about what they may have done during that visit? You know he insists that they didn't really talk about this, [that] they had breakfast and talked about hunting.

HA: I think that's shit. You know they came out here to fluff it. They had already done it publicly, [and] they both appeared at that goddamn Citizens' Council meeting.

RR: But do you have anything?

HA: Before that time the Citizens' Council never attracted more than a handful, but this was highly publicized.

RR: But Orval didn't go to the Citizens' Council.

HA: I know he didn't, but he could certainly know what they were saying. But with Marvin sitting there—also, somebody, the governors—which the hell one was it? One of the firebrand governors—no, it was Eastland. Eastland was heading up

the Citizens' Council. About two months before this happened, Eastland had a speech somewhere, which supplied the bumper signs that said, "We Can't Compromise. We're Losing Ground. Gradualism." He said the governor of Arkansas had abandoned us. "He's going to let the schools be desegregated over there. He's abandoned us. If this keeps on, we're lost." So I'm sure he was getting that from all sides. I think he was getting telegrams. I think he was getting phone calls from all these firebrands. Then Griffin and Harris come in there and put in the coup de grâce. Here Roy Harris is saying, with Marvin sitting there nodding in agreement, "We are prepared in Georgia. Unlike your governor, our governor has promised that he will call out the National Guard. He'll call out the state police. He'll summon every red-blooded Georgian, and we'll never commit a black person to [a white school]." Here is Orval—he has to be in the hall.

RR: Well, he does admit that this had a profound influence on what he did. He at once saw the pressure from all over the state. Of course, by then it was too late.

HA: Too late, that's it.

RR: Now, let's go back again to when he first took office. You were friendly with him then?

HA: Yes.

[End Tape 2, Side 1]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 2]

RR: Why didn't you keep his ear? Why didn't you go on and persuade him to do what

he needed to be doing on this issue?

HA: Well, I think to some extent, in as far as I thought it would do any good, we did.

Of course, we had been writing about this.

RR: Yes, but that's not the same as having a drink with him or talking to him.

HA: Well, I don't—I guess that's right. I say I never really had that kind of personal relationship with Orval anyway.

RR: There would have been an opening for it. He was indebted to you, and he would have felt warmly toward you.

HA: Well, he may have been, but I think again, it may have been part of his nature. He resented the fact that he had a debt.

RR: But if you had wanted to . . .

HA: Yes, if I had wanted to. Well, I said there at the end—I said to Hugh Patterson, "Do you think I should go out there and make one last pitch to Orval and really call him on that?"

RR: Yes, but by then it was too late.

HA: It was much too late.

RR: But I guess, Harry, what I'm saying is why didn't some of you leaders in Little Rock make it your business to see that this fellow did the right thing instead of turning him over to Witt Stephens?

HA: I don't think that I ever could have been thought of as a leader in that sense. I think we were trying to maintain a standard to which the wise and just could repair. We were trying to prepare people for this change, and we were on the

editorial page and the reporting. When we got into this resistance business in the legislature, we were attacking every one of those goddamn bills. I mean, we were writing really stringent—just tracking this stuff. When it would come up, [we would] denounce it every day. Your question is a proper one. Why didn't I follow up personally if I felt so strongly about this and try to persuade Orval? There's another reason that's quite revealing, and I might can tell you. When I went [and] took a year's leave for Stevenson in 1956 and went with Adlai, shortly after I got up to Chicago, Orval, of course, was then governor. Bill Fulbright was a strong supporter of Stevenson's. [He] had Stevenson come down for a duck shoot at this damn place in south Arkansas with strange . . .

RR: Dr. Rushing's?

HA: Dr. Rushing's place. So I brought Adlai down here—I was the only aide with him—to Rushing's place, and he had a couple of the other governors [with him]. I think the governor of Mississippi was there for the duck shoot. I think Hale Boggs may have been there. There was quite a few, and the whole purpose of this was to give Adlai a chance to get to know these people in some informal situation. Adlai was a hell of a hunter, anyway. I mean, he could shoot any goddamn thing that moved. I was bored to death with the fucking thing, sitting out there in the middle of that swamp in this strange, wiggly, wet—so Orval was there, and I did everything I could to put him together with Stevenson. I certainly was socializing with him as much as you could do under those circumstances. It turned out that we didn't persuade Orval. Orval went with Harriman, who tried to

drop Stevenson. I think probably Sid was responsible for persuading—Sid was very strong for the unions [and] Harriman and Truman. Truman by that time was pissed off at Stevenson. So Truman may have had a hand in this, too. I did try to persuade Orval to support Stevenson or I couldn't deliver my own delegation to my candidate. I'll never forget and he never did. They supported Harriman right on in. Well, that may have convinced me to some degree that I really didn't have any real influence with him.

RR: I guess what I want to hear you say—I'd like for you to assure me that this was not simply an extension of this class problem that we were talking about earlier. That Orval simply didn't appeal to you.

HA: Well, I don't think that's true. I really don't think that's true. I never had any adverse reaction personally to him at all. You know, he wasn't the kind of fellow that I'd like to have sat around with all night drinking whiskey, but I certainly had nothing against him, and I didn't dislike him. I certainly had no feeling of scorn for him until he began—actually, I really got personally outraged. I saw what he was doing within the system, but that was fairly late in the game. That really didn't—no, there was no feeling like that prior to that legislative session where he kept playing footsy with these characters, trying to dodge around as best he could. I thought he should have stayed away from them as far as he could, but he didn't. So then, probably, I began to feel some contempt for him, and he was doing what I thought was really a—the other thing is, now that you mention it, that we all to some extent relied on the fact that the establishment had come around to support

the school board and that Orval, presumably up to that point, was not opposed to the school board. We didn't think that anybody in the local establishment was trying to influence him. They had a man by the name of Guthrie [who] was a blithering idiot, and he was the spokesman, and Jim Johnson, the firebrand. I think probably we all thought you don't need to do anything about Faubus. He's going to take a law-and-order stance if needed. That's what the school board was pleading with him: "Just don't have to talk about the merits of the case. You're going to stand, [and] you're not going to permit any disorder. If any disorder comes, you'll use the full force and authority of the office by calling out the Guard and the state police to back up the local police." By the time we got into the short rows there, it was really too late to make much difference anyway. I don't think anything—people like—well, certainly [Winthrop] Rockefeller making the plea, and there were other people I'm sure went out there and talked to Orval.

RR: Yes, and by then it was—were you ever aware that Orval . . . ?

HA: Also, I don't know where Witt Stephens was at that time.

RR: He was not where he claims now.

HA: I'm sure that's probably the case, but I don't know whether Witt was actively . . .

RR: No, he wasn't.

HA: I think all Witt wanted to do was get Orval elected. He probably agreed that he needed to have . . .

RR: He didn't care one way or the other about integration. He insists now that he was

an integrationist all the time. He says, "I always was in favor of the niggers."

HA: I think it's probably true that he wasn't a segregationist. I don't think he cared. All he wanted to do was to get his [candidate elected], and I suspect supporting "the niggers" was all right with him, but not opposing "the niggers."

RR: But were you ever aware after Orval became governor that he felt that the Little Rock establishment held him in contempt [and] that he felt resentment toward the establishment?

HA: I don't think I was aware of that until about the time it all blew up. Prior to that I don't think I was aware of that. I don't think that I felt he was being scorned. I don't think he was particularly.

RR: He feels that he was.

HA: I know he does. I know now that he does. I think that he felt that I was scorning him, and I wasn't, certainly not intentionally. I don't think I felt that he was getting a bad press or that he was getting a cold shoulder from the establishment. I recognized—well, the goddamn real shit-ass is that I didn't have much to do with Billy Rector and those people. They had been great fans of Francis Cherry, so I wasn't a fan of theirs at that level. These were the people who certainly did look down on Orval because they looked down on everybody, looked down on me, too, I guess. So, no, I don't think so. I don't think that. His perception was certainly there. I don't doubt that because I think it was a powerful force.

RR: I want to make it clear he's never said that he thought you looked down on him. When he talks about this, it is usually in very general terms, and I know that he's

talking about Billy Rector and some of that crowd. He has had an occasional reference to Hugh that makes me think that he thought Hugh looked down on him.

HA: That's right. That's unsettled because Hugh has a quality about him—although I think basically [when] you get close to him, he is a cream puff. He's very soft in any kind of human relations term. He's really not a snob.

RR: Hugh had maintained some very close relations with him. He served on the Governor's Commission for Education.

HA: That was McMath's appointment, not Orval's.

RR: Wasn't he still active while Orval was [governor]?

HA: Yes. I was there, and I was on the board of the Arkansas State Teachers College.

RR: And helped pass the sales tax increase.

HA: That's right. I worked with Orval on that. I did see him then. We got him over, and I was working with the head of the teachers' association. Rozzelle. Forrest, of course, was working under any governor, including Orval, and so I worked closely with him, and so did Hugh, on things like getting anything to support the schools, including the sales tax. So, sure, I'm sure I talked with Orval about that. Mainly, the guy who was doing the wheeling and dealing was Forrest. I'd usually see Forrest, and he'd report on who he'd talked to and everything like that.

RR: I love old Forrest. He is such an open cynic to be a politician.

HA: That's right. You want to go over to the bar?

RR: Yes, I think it is . . .

HA: Are you getting what you want?

RR: I think so, yes.

[End of Interview]