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Interviewer: Bayor, Ronald H.

Interviewee: Allen, Ivan, 1911-2003

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RONALD BAYOR: Testing, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
eight, nine, ten.

(break in recording)

BAYOR: Talking to, so far, let's see, Robert Thompson,
[Reverend Borders?] -- Borders spoke very highly of you, by
the way. Sam Massell, I spoke to, and this week, I'm
trying to get in touch with John Calhoun and Grace
Hamilton.

IVAN ALLEN: Yeah.

BAYOR: So I'm moving along.

ALLEN: Well, you got some great people there. BAYOR:
Yeah, I think it's going to be a good bunch of
interviews.

ALLEN: How is Robert? I haven't seen him in 18 months.

BAYOR: He's fine. Little slower moving than before, I guess,
but he's...

ALLEN: Yeah.

BAYOR: He's doing all right.

ALLEN: Is he all right? I mean, the -- he and I both are getting old. I'm losing my line of thought, occasionally, how about him? Does he talk in -- unceasingly?

BAYOR: He wandered around a little.

ALLEN: Does he?

BAYOR: Yeah.

ALLEN: [01:00] Great old man.

BAYOR: Yeah, he is very nice, though.

ALLEN: He used to say, "The shortest" -- (inaudible) -- "shortest distance to heaven [is right from?] Atlanta, Georgia."

BAYOR: That's exactly what he said. (laughter)

ALLEN: Is that what he told you?

BAYOR: Right.

ALLEN: I don't know whether he told you or not, if I have a moment (inaudible), from the early days of the race problem was probably in the late '50s or the early '60s. A young black Korean veteran -- or did he tell you that story, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)? Well, there was still controversy about the buses in those days. The buses did not -- I don't think Ms. Parks has made her move in the government. But this young man had been in the war, and it was a beautiful Sunday morning, and he was riding the bus, and [02:00] the congregation had gathered in front of

[Fleet Street?], which was Borders's church, and I've had -
- Dr. Borders was standing out in front in his classic collar and robe. And this bus pulls up there, and it wasn't but one (inaudible), that was a young Korean veteran -- who knew it, though? And t, redneck -- probably. I'm not sure of that, you shouldn't say that, I'm not sure about that. But anyhow, he drove the bus up, stopped in front of the church there, and told him to get off. [When he?] came to the front of the bus to get off, he refused to let him off at the front of the bus. And the crowd out there, sensing what was happening, begin to get upset. The boy refused, and the crowd began to move around that bus, everywhere, there were some words or two, then finally the bus driver [03:00] made the worst mistake he probably ever made in his life, he pulled a gun out. And so, of course, what he didn't realize at that time was he couldn't get away either, but I guess he thought he could move the bus over people. But anyhow, one of those unfortunate things. And the old reverend, he saw what was happening and (inaudible) [struggling?], he went to the back door of the bus and [knocked it?]. And the bus driver had [to let him?] -- seeking some kind of relief, opened the back door, and Borders got on, and [he was the greatest man?], walked up front and told him (inaudible), said, "I don't want you

to -- you're absolutely on the" -- whatever he told him, you know he used to placate them, and got him to go down the door, get off the back of the bus, and then you had (inaudible). And he [04:00] opened the back door and the young veteran got off, swallowed his pride, and went back like Borders had told him. Borders walked back out the door to close it, (laughter) [pushed him through?]. He said, "Now" -- I don't know what he said, but the story is that he said that, "you're going to live or die through a decision, and if you do what I tell you, you can live." He said, "Now, I'm going to get -- make the people part, and you're going drive this bus up the street a few feet." He said, "When you do that, you're going to open the front door and I'm going to get out the front door." (laughter) So, the old boy let him move the bus 100 feet up the street, and every -- of course, the crowd through -- heck, Borders opened the front door, Borders stepped out the front door [and yelled to them?] and said everything's all right. (laughter)

BAYOR: That's a tense situation.

ALLEN: Oh, yes. Those kind of things could blow [05:00] any minute. There was a lot of them.

BAYOR: I wanted to first get back to the 1969 election, and then just sort of move back to now -- which you weren't in,

but I was curious about some things that were involved in the '69 mayoral election.

ALLEN: Yeah.

BAYOR: OK, the -- Up to apparently 1969, from what I've read, there was a coalition of north side whites and blacks in politics that stuck together.

ALLEN: Oh...

BAYOR: More or less.

ALLEN: Yeah, yeah. I think after Mr. Hartsfield had received a large percentage of the black vote, and I had received -- of course, I was running against Mr. Maddox, and that pretty well assured me 100% of the black vote. That is correct, there had done a coalition, and it was not a -- it was not any [06:00] structured coalition; it was just a coalition.

BAYOR: OK. Was it possible for, let's say, the black leaders to overrule the choice of a certain white candidate if they didn't really care for that person?

ALLEN: Well, up until that time, that had never been an issue. In the '69 election, we -- the black community selected Massell, who was a white candidate, and that -- the -- business civic group, which is the north side, backed (inaudible) [Cook?], (inaudible), they wanted -- there was never -- they did advise me in a meeting earlier

in the year, that they were going to support Massell.

[06:00]

BAYOR: Why Massell? Why Massell, for example, rather than Horace Tate, who was (inaudible)?

ALLEN: Well, Horace Tate had not come into it at that time. The picture was you'd see where we'd get to -- when we get to drawing conclusions, I mean, simple conclusions, and that -- this is my fault. I frequently do this. Those were not the circumstances. At -- When the early part of that election started... other than Stokes, perhaps, in Cleveland, which was a city that was completely dominated by the black community, most of the whites had moved out of Cleveland. But the black community, in the early part of that [08:00] election, was not cognizant of the fact of how much influence they had. And they did not attempt, in the beginning, to select a black candidate to run.

BAYOR: Horace Tate was really on his own, then?

ALLEN: Horace Tate kind of slid into it sideways, as I remember. There were a large number of candidates, and he did not go into it with the support of -- and never did get the strong support of the black community in the early, I don't think.

BAYOR: So, I guess the sense of it, then, was that a black could not get win in 1969?

ALLEN: That is correct. That is correct. Although I guess it was that year, '69, when Maynard did win, vice-mayor.

BAYOR: But I guess -- Then, I guess, [09:00] in a sense Massell was really a transitional figure, because this next election, Jackson did win.

ALLEN: That is correct.

BAYOR: I was also curious about racial factors as sort of an underlying issue in many decisions and events. And first of all, your 1961 win over Maddox, was that very much an election dealing with the racial factors -- were racial factors very prominent in that election?

ALLEN: Very muchly so. The race issue was reaching its highest point of heat at that time. I mean, the civil rights movement, per se, was coming into the whole picture and was kind of, of course, would dominate nearly every decision for the next four or five years after that [10:00] between passage of the Civil Rights Bill and the Voting Acts and all those things come to take care of the situation, but at that point, the -- (inaudible) the issue was very, very strong, very -- it was almost -- always [present?] and sometimes bordered on [violence?].

BAYOR: I noticed in the 1961 campaign, you became the first white politician to publicize your meetings with blacks, which had never been done before.

ALLEN: I had made that statement and put it in that book.

BAYOR: Right, I read your book.

ALLEN: Without ever having it contradicted, and I guess it -- the -- what caused me to do it was that [11:00] it -- there had always been, apparently, a common understanding amongst the white candidates that they wouldn't -- that they would not feature their efforts to solicit the black vote, particularly their schedules [where they?] were going. We were making many and many appearances in the community houses, which were the black churches. Nearly every night, there was, you know, a meeting at some black church, at which most of the candidates were there, and then some of the schools, Washington High School, I remember, I think was one of them. And we showed up out there, and of course, Maddox was not -- he would not come to them. And [12:00] that night, it was a matter of (inaudible) that night. I'm confused in my own mind exactly how it happened, but someone tried to question the candidates that were there, the issue of whether it was going to be made public or not. And I noticed that two of the candidates that was in the race, quietly, while we were still on the podium, slipped off the podium and got away -- and went out -- and I realized that it was an issue that Maddox was going to make a big thing out of. This was my first

(inaudible), the sooner we got it out in the open, that all could begin. And I remember [13:00] I went back that night and told (inaudible) from then on, my schedule was going to be public everywhere, regardless of where it was, and she said, "Well, that hasn't been the custom up to" -- [screw the?] custom, I'm not going to [defend?]. So, I tried then to bring it out in the open because I don't think it'll be an issue. And after we brought it out in the open, after I said, "Yes, I was there, were you there?" I mean the [fumes?] went out of it. It actually worked out all right.

BAYOR: OK, another thing in the Harold Martin book on Hartsfield, he mentioned that there was a bond issue in 1961, still, the cultural center in Piedmont Park, and he said that failed with north side realtors spread the word that it was resulting in [encouraging?] of blacks into the north side. Do you know anything about that at all?

ALLEN: Well, you know, it was my bond issue. (laughter)

[14:00] And that was a bond issue in which an anonymous -- the [Woodruff?] efforts in those days, everything was done anonymously, in those Woodruff days. They'd come by my house early in the spring and brought me a letter from one of the banks in Atlanta to make it official and (inaudible) \$4 million. And these were good [coins?] then; buildings at Georgia Tech didn't cost [a?] million. (laughter) But

anyhow, [a?] foundation was (inaudible) up to \$4 million, and the city and county would equally participate in, for the same amount of coin in the bondage, and so -- then, part of the bondage, the bond issue, was for about \$80 million. Piedmont Park, the south -- we were going to use the southwest corner, [15:00] southeast corner of Piedmont Park -- southwest corner of Piedmont Park to build. It cost us, so a similar -- the general idea was Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, something of that type. And they jumped on it, and generally, I think most people think that it was the bond issue was defeated on the basis that this money was being used to develop Piedmont Park for black residential business, to move a little to that area, and particularly, to integrate the park. The park was already integrated legally. But they did. It probably [happened between similar initiatives?], you know, then later had to take that out. And then they came to collect the bondage and [had nothing to show for it?].

BAYOR: So, the thought was that not only blacks need the park, but to build [16:00] housing in the area?

ALLEN: Yeah, but the main -- the -- sometimes they'll say (inaudible) expression, [and I probably?] (inaudible) expression, that the real issue was that you just didn't bring your blacks into Piedmont Park.

BAYOR: Another thing in your book that you mentioned, that the racial issues [probably?] delayed construction of the stadium in the early '60s. Do you remember that at all? There was just one reference to it in your book.

ALLEN: I don't know what -- it must be -- that must be... I don't know what you're referring to, now.

BAYOR: Well, I don't have the page number. I don't have the exact page number, but it was something about the construction of the stadium and it [17:00] being [probably?] delayed due to racial issues. I'm not sure -- I wasn't sure what you meant by that, exactly. (pause)

(break in recording)

BAYOR: OK, I was also wondering about the MARTA rail line. Apparently, the blacks [18:00] didn't support the first bond issue on that, and I was curious how they were won over to supporting it, putting a rail line with -- did it have anything to do with the fact that they were promised the rail line in the west, (inaudible) first?

ALLEN: No, no. The... As we went through the throes of starting with the government on a rapid transit system, there were innumerable major steps they had to take to bring it down to [a point?]. A financier was the key to the whole thing, and to -- the fact that the federal government was scratching and developing huge sums of money for the

purpose. Now, this is where the [Williams Bill?] will be the key to the rapid transit, and as it developed in the [19:00] early '60s, there would be no possibility of building the system during the early years. The... We had to create MARTA, which we you did on the first meeting in [Blue Hall?]. We had to get it adopted, by the state government to bring it out. You had to pass a statewide constitutional amendment in order to have the rights to -- all of which takes time as you go along. And, well, when you look back over the 20-odd years before it actually got -- the -- we knew, we always knew, that we were on precarious grounds of the city's share of the financing that you would need. [That number was between?] 10% and 20%, would have to come [20:00] from (inaudible). There was no -- the state had not granted the right of savings packages. Anyway, but the state also realized they had to put up 10% to justify it. And that was where [used to do?] many things came. And the first effort, the first referendum, which was a (inaudible) referendum, for [building?] a MARTA, we knew, was on [half of this ground?], but the theory was even if you lost it the first time, that may be necessary, to lose it once in order to pass it. It takes its time to educate the public. The public is after -- after that [all but?] voted on it and

[read?] it, and voters will have [not enough?] time to realize how badly they need it. And these things change. But the [21:00] -- we had the first referendum, I think, in '68 or '69, somewhere along then, and it had taken us seven years to bring it to that point. And we were seven -- we had the best leadership in the city. I mean, (inaudible) headed it up, also (inaudible) headed it up. MARTA [thing?]. Then, it came down, when you -- we didn't get but about 48% to 46% for it. And -- but that was an indication that we had a chance. But then, the [clever thing?] came along, and [we sent it?] to Leroy Johnson, who was today, talking about black -- I guess he's still in the state legislature. Leroy, who had [sponsored?] Massell; he was the man that put Massell into office. Senator Johnson conceived the idea -- I give him credit [22:00] for it [as I understand?] -- that the state would give us a one-cent sales tax privilege if -- because that would relieve the state of making contributions (inaudible) MARTA, and all this, but the main thing to do was if you could get a once-cent sales tax through, then, you wouldn't have to do it -- you wouldn't have to vote on overall (inaudible) increase, which is the hardest thing going because that's when you hit a tax break [already in?]. But a one-cent sales tax would come also from the people who would use it, as well

as from everyone else. It all just went into it, and he was the man who conceived the idea and put the one-cent sales tax through, and that's what enthused the black community because he promised them a ten-cent fair for 10 years. So, he just gave them the best bargain [23:00] anybody ever had, and that was a one-cent sales tax, which didn't seem like much.

BAYOR: But there wasn't any promise put in the west side, as a way of winning black people over?

ALLEN: Oh, that was no bigger than -- it had to -- always had to run to north, south, east, west. As I remember at that -- that never was any -- well, it was an issue, but it -- the main thing was you got the sales tax and the black people, that was Johnson's idea of passing a sales tax by guaranteeing a ten-cent fair, is what they were looking at. They knew they were buying the best bargain. And he could sell, and they sold it, and they got 100% black support in the referendum.

BAYOR: But the real [affair?] was the fact of (inaudible)?

ALLEN: Yes.

BAYOR: How about the 1966 Sandy Springs annexation vote? Did that have a racial aspect of it?

ALLEN: Oh, that was -- Oh, boy... [24:00] Oh, in every way, yes, particularly in the (inaudible). Oh, yeah, that was -

- we just got clobbered [due to?] the race issue, any time we tried to -- and there were several different times we tried to make [moves after Massell?] on the race issue.

The race issue just clobbered us. No question about that.

BAYOR: Would you also say in terms of in the developing of regional governments, that the race issue was a factor there, too?

ALLEN: Man, you couldn't get it through to save yourself.

BAYOR: Why?

ALLEN: Because the race issue, sure, those that are inside and got the power inside [vote on it?], and those that are outside (inaudible).

BAYOR: That's the way it seemed to me, too.

ALLEN: Oh, no question, no question about it. And you have to realize -- you have to realize that a lot of these people that fell outside [25:00] were forced to move. Of course, they moved themselves because of the black people moving in. You see, the whole west side of Atlanta was white. It was the lower income group, the west side, and as the black people moved in and more and more came in and it's -- in those days, the city was getting some growth, in -- which they haven't had in recent years, they were pushing these people out. Thousands of people, moved off to the west side, into Cobb County and into Douglas County.

And as far as (inaudible), you -- we -- one of those things that there's just no way. You have to face the fact that they're really extremely [good at that?]. Especially in the olden days, if you say they were losing their home and everything had got -- all the investment that they bring to it. The black men always had to pay more for the land than it was worth, no question about that.

BAYOR: But basically, these people [26:00] who were moving out did not want to be back in the city, where the black majority was, still had (inaudible).

ALLEN: That's right. No, they don't -- and for -- this was particularly true of the schools.

BAYOR: The schools [would have to be?] merged --

ALLEN: That's right. Oh, Lord. [See, I can't understand?] (inaudible) leadership.

BAYOR: Another thing I was curious about, Atlanta's moderate handling of the racial issues during the '60s and your particular testimony in favor of the '64 Civil Rights Act. I was curious, did that lead to any special allocation of funds from the federal government, in terms of renewal policies? In other words, you had -- you obviously did a splendid thing in terms of being the only Southern mayor to support --

ALLEN: Unconsciously, in the beginning. I believe my testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee [27:00] was not predicated on (inaudible) integrated (inaudible) my feelings about civil rights and public accommodation. I had changed my own views and come a very long way. At some point, sitting in the mayor's office, I suddenly -- I did realize that all of the big money that we're spending in Atlanta had to come to Atlanta (inaudible), had been unfair to what the state ever did. But low-income housing, in which you rebuilt houses for 10% of the population of the city, 40,000 people. And they were magnificent new -- and I don't care what anybody says -- through the years, [28:00] they have served -- there have been exceptions, but they have served nobly to raise the level of the people that were there. God knows they needed it. They had (inaudible). The expressway system and all that was my... We were beginning to get -- urban renewal was all federal money. All the big money, the big money, [that was?] coming to the city, [they was?] coming to -- big government at the same time, the cities were just raising hell with the federal government by anything and how to do it, all because they had to conform to certain patterns of (audio interruption; inaudible) black people. And they -- everybody in the South was just damning the federal

government. And I just didn't -- just had plain common, hard sense to realize that... no doubt about it, (inaudible) from New Haven, [29:00] he was mayor, and I had talked to him because he was just -- he had just milked the federal government dry, getting money to rebuild New Haven. And I -- I realized that I had the position, using my civil rights position on public accommodation, I had the potential (inaudible). And I (inaudible) really well, [why I shouldn't look at things?] I see.

BAYOR: You definitely thinks benefits came to the city because of your stance?

ALLEN: Atlanta was really the first to get [huge?] funds. In [moderate?] cities, they were the first to get funds and economic opportunity, and we just pumped the federal money in here, and we built more low income houses than had ever been built before, we remodeled more neighborhoods, we got every -- all we had to do was put out our hand, and you had an offer for someone to give us the money.

BAYOR: I guess most people didn't realize that access to the money would be so beneficial.

ALLEN: Well, it wasn't -- From then on, I became the champion of the [damn thing?]. Every time I made a [30:00] talk or anybody else, I told them Atlanta was -- boy, we were

begging to get that (inaudible), you know? Even governments like to have money [for themselves?].

BAYOR: Oh, sure. (laughter)

ALLEN: And I was a guy in the South that was saying [nice things about him?]. We still -- I got (inaudible) out in DeKalb County, and he headed up the city [investors?], to get (inaudible). My Lord, we got more money, federal money, than anybody else. We've been living off of it ever since.

BAYOR: How about in terms of other benefits? Let's say getting a baseball team, was that at all a product of...

ALLEN: No, that was all a product of the civic community.

BAYOR: OK, in terms of putting a Major League team here, where whites and blacks [had to?] play together and sit in the stands together, I mean, obviously you needed a public accommodation Civil Rights Act. If the '64 act was not passed, [31:00] would the Braves ever come here? Or would (inaudible) still be coming here?

ALLEN: Well, that had been the -- that had been a great block, up to the last time. But all of us was coming together. We had integrated baseball in old Ponce de Leon Park. It was -- I thought they would all walk out [before we built?]. But that -- that was not an issue in the building of the stadium, and in Major, there was never --

everything in Atlanta was sweet and honey and apple pie when the Braves came as far as race relations. I'm talking about on overall, there was just a -- there were some underlying things, like [Henry Harrison?]'s wife, (laughs) who damn near turned the [city?] upside down.

BAYOR: Was she white, or --

ALLEN: No, she was black. [32:00] She was just [hard to handle?]. We had several major racial incidents that lead to 1,000 people white and 1,000 people black, all who [understand?] that they had seen the same incident, and that had opposite views on it. In other words, just the most ridiculous thing you'd ever seen. But those kind of things still happen, you know. It was a period of segregation (inaudible) even the Braves, they (inaudible).

BAYOR: How about in terms of bringing more business conventions to the city? Do you think the integration (inaudible) that, or...

ALLEN: That... of course, it was absolutely necessary and was helpful, and -- but the big thing about bringing conventions to the city, it's all about getting some decent public facilities. You get your stadium and the Coliseum and the civic center, and [33:00] then the new hotels. The new hotels, in the beginning, they came out of the urban renewal areas.

BAYOR: So in a sense you were still benefiting from the support you [got from?] the federal government. I'm also curious about whether black leaders had any major voice in your administration on various decisions. For example, choosing new sites or where to build public housing. Did you consult with the black community on these issues?

ALLEN: They were not -- at that point, there were not a lot of blacks in position. All (inaudible) there; it didn't happen barely -- it didn't happen overnight. [34:00] I never reached the point of appointing a black head of any of the city departments. We had increased black employment. They hadn't -- and it did not reach that point. I brought (inaudible) Hamilton and (inaudible) came in [over there?] in charge of certain community (inaudible). BAYOR: But let's say in terms of economic decisions, like renewal sites or public housing, did you consult with [Keefe, Sr.?] or [Reverend Borders?] or any of the people that were leaders?

ALLEN: The city worked very closely with the -- with Dr. Borders, and I personally (inaudible) getting necessary civic aid on the development of the Fleet Street area over there, yes, he was building [35:00] full support and every consideration. It was a new voice. I mean, it was a new mode. For the first time, a black man could sit at the

head table. He was making -- participating in decisions at that time, but had not yet reached the point of being appointed as, you know, a candidate in the city department.

BAYOR: I notice quite often that blacks were very upset about all the public housing being placed on the west side. Was there any kind of -- any reason for that, do you think?

ALLEN: On the -- Well, that's quite true, and that did -- that was becoming more and more of an issue as time went on. And we began to look for different sites. Of course, the feeling had always been that you used this low-income [36:00] housing for -- to clear up slum areas, to [purchase slum?] areas, and to build it where there was slum -- you know, rebuild those areas. This began to become a heated point, yes, and become an issue.

BAYOR: But nonetheless, the housing pretty much went to the west side anyway.

ALLEN: Now, what?

BAYOR: The public housing still went to the west side, it was still being built on the west side.

ALLEN: (inaudible), most of it, yeah.

BAYOR: Was there any thought of the public housing, or let's say highways, being used as buffers between the races at all?

ALLEN: I don't recall that being an issue.

BAYOR: I was also curious whether the pressure generated in Atlanta by the civil rights movement was more effective here, let's say, [37:00] than, for example, Birmingham, because of the critical power blacks had in Atlanta, and also because of this long tradition of cooperation between the races. Was there any -- Was there any feeling that civil rights was more workable here, and black groups had more of an influence here because --

ALLEN: Well, we were way ahead of attitude compared to Alabama. Georgia had had (inaudible) [practically was Alabama?]. And Atlanta was certainly far ahead. I've always attributed it to the fact that you had a very articulate, educated, intelligent group of black leadership. And you had these six great colleges and university out here. We were a main -- which were the main thrust of America, of higher education for black people. [38:00] And although they were extremely restrictive in graduates and jobs they could get into, they had stayed here, a lot of them, and they were -- they had acquired some good governmental jobs, particularly in the teaching profession. They knew -- they -- most of the highly-abled black leadership of America at that point was coming out of Atlanta, Georgia. Whitney Young, Martin Luther King Jr., [William O. Partner?]. People just went in. I can't

recall all the names, but most of them. Plus, the fact that you had a substantial Negro (inaudible) community, too, that was really successful here. [39:00] You had the banks (inaudible) the bank. You had Atlanta Life Insurance Company. You had a [Neech Nelson?] drug store chain, you had a west side business area, which was built around Paschal Brothers out there. [I guess?] you had a lot of things in Atlanta that you didn't have in Birmingham. In Birmingham, you just had whatever there had been well under feet.

BAYOR: In other words, I guess it was easier to deal with the black community since many of them were -- at least the leadership was affluent and they were educated.

ALLEN: Well, two [waves?], I think, you got that in -- the [rule of?] ability and [sociability?] of these people was way ahead of what you'd find in another section of the country. You didn't have it in New York, you didn't have it in Philadelphia, where you had your (inaudible) black (inaudible). Atlanta had had an established Negro community that had [40:00] -- that was asserting itself, that was more capable of asserting itself in a non-violent fashion than other segments of the country.

BAYOR: Well, in terms of the nonviolence, then, would you attribute that, for example, to the fact that there had been a long period, long tradition of talking to blacks?

ALLEN: Sure.

BAYOR: And cooperation --

ALLEN: No question about it.

BAYOR: -- to solve problems?

ALLEN: No question about it. And that leadership surfaced, began to expand and surface, very rapidly as they had an opportunity to. It was just all the workers [in?] the world, no question about that.

BAYOR: That's interesting. OK, a few other points I wanted to raise. The school closings, or possibility of school closings back in '61, what effect do you think that would have had [41:00] on the city?

ALLEN: Oh, I think it would have been a disaster. I think most people agreed. You just can't get a -- sacrifice public education. That was just a -- the whole effort in the state was to hide behind Atlanta. They -- Every effort was made to have an issue come be in Atlanta, you know, because this was a big city, and all this massive anti-integration legislation had been passed by the state books, segregated laws. They were all aimed at having this thing happen in Atlanta, and let them pay the price; that's where

all these smart black people are, except they didn't call them black people, you know?

BAYOR: Do you think [42:00] Atlantans at that time were watching very carefully what was happening in Little Rock or Birmingham, in terms of not wanting that?

ALLEN: Yeah, the civic leadership in the city was, of course, asserting itself more and more and (inaudible) responsibility. Knew what would happen, yes, sir. Yes, sir.

BAYOR: And more concerned about in the first place.

ALLEN: Well, no question about that.

BAYOR: OK. Another point, in your 1969 State of the City address, you said, this is a quote from you, that "the status of the Negro citizens was Atlanta's number one problem." I was curious in what way you meant that. This is a '69 statement.

ALLEN: Well, that was [43:00] said in reference to the condition that [he?] was in at that time, that he had not had -- as the whole, they had not had an education. Thousands of black people had moved in here from rural Georgia, had had no education, had no home ownership, had no family background, had no church collection. They didn't have any of the stability, and this great flux of people and a place for them -- it's still a great problem

today. Unemployment and jobs, all these things were coming -- [full flood tide?], that had to be -- something had to be done about. The Negro -- both the Negro citizen, his needs, and the issue itself. The conflict it was creating as all this change was coming about made the Negro citizen the number one problem.

BAYOR: In other words, unless the blacks are [44:00] brought up to a level, a decent level, and there's better race relations, that the city's going through fall apart at some point, [is that what you're saying here?]?

ALLEN: I think that's what I was saying, yes.

BAYOR: I also wanted to mention something else, that -- plus, you've already sort of explained away in your book, but I was curious again about the infamous or famous Peyton Road barrier that pops up.

ALLEN: Sure. That was one of several bad mistakes I made. Unfortunately, by God, I got led down a primrose path, and I should have had enough sense not to do it. It was in the first year I was in office, and I had gone overboard on a number of instances to try to work out problems with the black community, and... and this was a major issue out there that looked like it could be controlled and make [45:00] everybody happy, because on the north side of the Peyton Road barrier was close to 400 acres of vacant land

that had been artificially and maliciously zoned in order to prevent black housing on it. It was zoned for industry, and... I was led to believe that we could work out, that we could take care of the white people down there, and that we could then, by doing this, get a -- if we did this, we could get them to agree to rezone and open up this land. I really thought we were going to make a beneficial trade out of it. What I didn't know was -- what I should [46:00] have realized was you can't -- there's no (inaudible) around.

BAYOR: I spoke to Cecil Alexander, of the (inaudible) --

ALLEN: Who?

BAYOR: Cecil Alexander.

ALLEN: Yeah.

BAYOR: And he said it was not so much to keep blacks out, but to make whites feel secure in their own neighborhood.

ALLEN: That was pretty much (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BAYOR: What impact do you think it had on blacks?

(break in audio file)

ALLEN: I knew the flood tide was [for?], and I should have had enough of that good -- or shouldn't have listened to people that, you know, that were advising on it. And I guess it was people covering their own [nest?], and I, I

didn't -- I thought it would work out satisfactory for everyone.

BAYOR: In terms of those transitional [47:00] white neighbors, just [neighborhoods?] on the south side that were leaving from white to black, was there any effort made at all to keep them integrated, [to get a government parcel?]? Or was it assumed that some neighborhoods would have to be white and some black? Can you give me an example?

ALLEN: Well, that -- I meant to -- I don't know that I can -- there were dozens of (inaudible) of transitional areas developing. A block that would be solid white, a black family would buy a house, and then the thing would just be haywire. And they -- frequently, they ended up -- they [done gave up?]. Strong, fine, (inaudible) white people demanding what the city was going to do about it. Well, there wasn't a damn [48:00] thing the city could do about it. And it took them -- it took a lot of courage to have to stand there and tell them. I've had (inaudible) standing right in front of me, tower over the desk, and say, "God damn it, I [thought only one?] and I'm not going to put up with this, and God damn you," but you know this.

BAYOR: (inaudible).

ALLEN: They just used to -- they eat you up. I mean, the transitional neighborhoods were coming so fast... You know, everybody was running, I guess, or (inaudible) somebody in the block [went to run?], then if one block went, another block went.

BAYOR: And you had these concerns about violence, also.

ALLEN: Yes, there was violence, there was -- but there had been, you know, [there was kind of?] [49:00] -- still had been black families that had been bombed out and things.

BAYOR: Was there any effort to convince the whites to stay [by anybody?]?

ALLEN: All kinds of meetings. All kind of community relations groups and everything, and meetings... And within the [blocks?] themselves, [ain't nobody?] would band together and [move like they was going to move?], and everything. None of them [held out?]. It was just a [irresistible?] tide that swept through. You had to face it. And the Peyton Road thing was (inaudible) appealing group of young white people that had built in that Peyton Road area down there, off to one side. And it looked like a good solution, wasn't going to hurt anybody, we thought. But oh boy, what a mistake it was. [50:00]

BAYOR: OK, just two other things: the 1973 mayor's election, was there white business community support for Maynard Jackson [at that time]?

ALLEN: I don't -- I can't answer that question. I don't know how much there was. There was some, yes. It's usually -- usually, would have been, I think that the number of -- and I think -- and I'm not positive about this, but I think there were a number of [Jewish?] families that did support. As a whole, there was not a great deal of support. I did not -- I refused to enter into the race. Either I stayed out of it completely.

BAYOR: I'm just curious whether the -- whether the business [51:00] leadership here saw the handwriting on the wall, that a black was now going to be elected mayor, and threw their support (inaudible) him.

ALLEN: Well, there'd been innumerable times when we -- and I use the word "we" -- when we had known that and then had gone against our better judgment, thinking that there was some way to worm around. And I mean, that -- then that would never have -- that never has been [defeated?]. That was what we [tried to do?] with Massell's election. We thought we could get [Cooke?] elected, and we never could. And [other?] times, we went out there, he was (inaudible) trying to run an anti-black campaign and get reelected

vice-mayor. [Got to beat -- Sam beat?]. You take it down through the [wards?]; every time anybody had tried to run an anti-black campaign, [52:00] and so far back as I should remember, he'd gotten defeated.

BAYOR: Why's that?

ALLEN: Well, because it was -- there was a -- in those days, there was a swing vote. There was always a split within the white groups, as long as you had white candidates. But then you -- by the time they came in and had black candidates, [they were the predominant?] -- they had the most votes, that all.

BAYOR: OK, but in the earlier period, I guess, they were the swing vote (audio interruption; inaudible) Hartsfield administration, as opposing --

ALLEN: He brought 100% out against -- I can't remember. [If you?] go back and look at the records, you'll find out that the last time he ran, might be against [Archie Ranger?], (inaudible) County commissioner. He had to get the black vote almost 100%. [Lindsey?] got more white folks than him. Just (inaudible) got more white votes than I got. [53:00] Oh, I beat him very badly, but I think it -- I think he was [spoken out for?]....

BAYOR: So, the black vote became very important, I guess, after 1946, when the white primary was [lost?]?

ALLEN: Yeah, '48, I believe, was when they eliminated the Democratic White Primary. Of course, eliminating it and then getting it in the full swing, there wasn't many blacks -- there weren't as many black (inaudible) of that, and they had a lot of other things. And eventually getting them registered to vote (inaudible) extremely (inaudible).

BAYOR: OK. The only other thing I wanted to ask you was whether you have any information on others to contact [about this?]?

ALLEN: Well, you got some very fine people there. I'm particularly -- (inaudible) Hamilton and [54:00] Reverend Borders, and Thompson was a good man, too. He was in housing, as I remember, start a federal housing [at my state?]. What's his first name? [Ralph?]?

BAYOR: Robert.

ALLEN: Robert, Bob Thompson.

BAYOR: Well, I guess somebody like, well, [Dan Zeutsch?] would be great, could be on my list.

ALLEN: Dan's great. You could ask him.

BAYOR: Do you have an address on him?

ALLEN: Central Atlanta, probably. Black leadership...

BAYOR: Well, Warren Cochrane is the only other one I did.

ALLEN: Well, he's gone -- is he still around?

BAYOR: Oh, yeah.

ALLEN: (inaudible) [55:00] He was a good man. He was a quiet leader. He had a great deal of -- he had a great deal of great insights on the black community [that he was head of?]. He was head of [Butler Street Y?] (inaudible) black problems and talked about it. I guess it was (inaudible) relations, [and who I knew?]. You got some more black people that are in those kind of things now, (inaudible).

BAYOR: Well, I want to eventually speak to Jesse Hill and (inaudible) [Russell?], but they're hard to catch. (laughter)

ALLEN: I expect they are, and the demands on their time are very high. I mean, I do -- they're two fellows that are -- [56:00] their time -- they just don't have time -- I [don't know how?] Jesse Hills stays alive. He must deal with 15 major company boards on a --

BAYOR: I'm going to try, but I don't think I'm going to be able to get to talk to him about...

ALLEN: You couldn't keep Jesse Hill from anything in (inaudible). He's a great guy. [I loved him?] -- I phoned him on everything that I could. He taught me a few other [tricks?]. (inaudible).

BAYOR: Well, so did a lot of people, I guess, I mean, it was
a big change for everybody, North and South, during that
time. Well, thanks very much.

ALLEN: Well, I'm glad to talk to you.

BAYOR: Well, I appreciate you giving --

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