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RONALD BAYOR: Four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10. OK. As you know, I'm looking particularly at the desegregation issues back in the '60s. And I interviewed John [Lessen?] about three weeks ago, I guess it was.

HORACE TATE: I see.

BAYOR: And one of the things he said that, I'll quote from him, "I really believe we could have an integrated school system if we took it slower." And I was curious, what could've been done differently during that time?

TATE: (laughter) Boy oh boy, that's the understatement of the day. Exhibit A would be (inaudible) -- that it would be the Bankhead section. I recall that during the time that we were discussing [00:01:00] integrating schools, and how we would go about it, I insisted that we should integrate forthwith, that we don't need to wait and give people a chance to move out. And my statement had been proven to be right, we wait a while, and people move out to Bankhead section, that's about two miles from here, Bankhead High School, and that entire section there was,

I'm going to guess, 95% white. The school was 100% white. And it took about five years, if I make no mistake, it was -- I don't want to put the years on it, but I'm going to say it was somewhere between '69 and '74, '75 that they really started trying to integrate [00:02:00] schools here. And at that time, when we started integrating schools, as I said, that school was 100% white. About five years later, 65-70% of the whites in the community had moved out, and when the school was integrated, the school was -- so-called integrated, it was probably 60-65% black. And everything showed (inaudible) when the schools get to be 65-70% black, then it'll be 95% black, (inaudible) years later, it's going to be 100% black.

BAYOR: Well, the re-segregation started, that's for sure.

TATE: Yeah. So, I don't think that going slower would have the difference that going fast would have (inaudible). If we had gone fast, at least we would've known that people were running (inaudible) basically, because they didn't want to integrate. [00:03:00] We went slower, we didn't know whether the schools were not integrated because of the [soreness?] due to the fact that parents moved out of the community, or whether it's due to the fact that they want the kids to go to school with (inaudible) black kids.

BAYOR: Do you think he impeded the integration efforts at all, (inaudible) because of his policies?

TATE: Yeah. Sort of. His policy was one of going slowly. It certainly did.

BAYOR: I know he told --

TATE: I'm not going -- I'm not saying that it was in his heart, or it was that he was not being sincere when he'd use his method, but I certainly think that his method impeded school integration. It certainly allowed people a chance to move out of the communities. [00:04:00] And when the people move out of the communities, and we decided then go to wholesale integration, or what they call wholesale integration, there was nobody there to integrate with.

BAYOR: Well, I spoke to (inaudible) said also, by the time he took over, there was no whites. What about the freedom of choice plan?

TATE: Oh, freedom of choice plans, it's for (inaudible) was terrible for integrating schools. Now, I have no problem with freedom of choice as such, but if we were going to integrate schools, that is, you're going to make a determined effort, a concentrated effort, to put white kids and black kids in the same school building, then you can't have a choice, you've got to send them to the schools that are in the neighborhoods, it may sound like I'm

contradictory here, but my feeling has always been -- and I was not the [00:05:00] superintendent, I'm always aware of the fact that the guy who's in the position, where they say [the role?] is supposed to be performed, say they have a better opportunity to perform it was the one who wanted the position. I was a school board member from '65 to '69, I was not the superintendent. But, what's (inaudible)?

BAYOR: About the freedom of choice.

TATE: Yeah, but he should have -- they should have had the children within a geographical area, they go to the school --

BAYOR: You mean a non-racial geographical area?

TATE: That's right, non-racial geographical area, to go a school in that area.

BAYOR: Yes.

TATE: Now, I've never had any problem, basically, with all blacks going to all-black schools, if it's in that area. Everybody in the area go to that school. [00:06:00] So, I thought when we integrated schools, if white children and black children lived in an area, in which they were assigned a school (inaudible). This busing, I never did believe -- I don't agree with the busing across geographical lines in order to achieve racial integration, I never did believe in that, and I think, again, I'm not

trying to say I was a prophet, but I think that my basic feelings about integration have been borne out.

BAYOR: So, you would have supported things like non-racial (inaudible) zoning, or [Pad?] schools, or magnet schools, things like that, I guess?

TATE: Yeah, if magnet schools -- the magnet schools concept, as I understand it, sounds good, but in some instances, it had been used to send children across geographical lines, and to that extent, I didn't like it. But otherwise, I thought [00:07:00] I would support it.

BAYOR: One of the things I sort of got to see is that freedom of choice allowed a lot of the whites to escape desegregation.

TATE: That's true.

BAYOR: And there was one case, for example, in the parochial schools, I don't know if you remember that, but right before the black kids began -- were ready to arrive in September, (inaudible) sends the letter out to all of the white kids in the school saying that they have a choice to move, and they all moved. By the time the blacks arrived, there was no whites left.

TATE: Yeah, yeah, I was -- I remember a lot around that, centered around their school, I was involved in -- people out there, in that particular church, built classrooms onto

that church, getting ready for integration, I suppose. At that time, I think they had decided to pull that church out of public schools, when integration came about. And for a while, they operated. Have you been out there? Do you know where (inaudible) section is?

BAYOR: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

TATE: It's a beautiful -- it's a big church out there. Of course, it's now [00:08:00] 20 years removed, 20 years old. But there must be 25-plus basic classrooms attached to that church. They didn't intend to integrate, as I saw it. But...

BAYOR: This is a white church?

TATE: This was a white church, that's right, it's a white church. It's black now. (laughter) The blacks have taken over now, but...

BAYOR: But it seems like the freedom of choice just allowed the white kids to run off to another school nearby.

TATE: That's right, yes.

BAYOR: And it wasn't -- I can see your point, I mean, I think if they did it fast, integration...

TATE: They wouldn't have a chance to run.

BAYOR: They wouldn't have a chance to run. How about, was it difficult for a black student to transfer to a white school (inaudible)?

TATE: It is.

BAYOR: [If it’s their choice?].

TATE: It is, because Dr. [Letson?] has a policy, he said if I -- he had three factors would determine whether or not a black could move from a predominantly black -- from the black school to the white school. One was choice, one was proximity, and the other one was [00:09:00] availability of space. And if one factor didn’t catch him, the other two did, and the third one did. In other words, it was always -- he was too far, he lived too far from the school, or there wasn’t enough space in the school. It was one of the three. If kids met two of the requirements, they couldn’t meet the third.

BAYOR: So, he really did put blocks up to...

TATE: Oh, yes.

BAYOR: This thing about availability of space, my impression of reading through the material is that a lot of the white schools were, sort of, being underused during this time. Black schools were overcrowded.

TATE: Black schools.

BAYOR: And the cutoff enrollment for the white school was much less than the black school, in other words, they would claim that the white school was already filled up (inaudible).

TATE: They couldn’t go there.

BAYOR: Yeah.

TATE: Did you ever -- did Letson talk with you about -- Dr. Letson, talk to you about [00:10:00] [M&M?] majority?

BAYOR: He didn’t really speak that much about that.

TATE: That was nothing but another kind of (inaudible). If you wanted to transfer from a school in which the racial group was in the majority, and one that was in the minority, under certain conditions, you might transfer. But again, that was put up as a smokescreen, as far as I’m concerned, to allow parents in the community to have an opportunity to relocate (inaudible). I think his integration plan, I am sincere in my opinion, was designed to give the people a chance to move out of the community, so they wouldn’t have to integrate.

BAYOR: (inaudible) he talked about tipping points a lot. But he had to be very careful not to put [00:11:00] too many blacks into the school, above 30%, because then all the whites would run, so he wanted to keep it below a tipping point.

TATE: Yes. But that said, you see, that’s following the principle of -- I can’t tell you -- have to [pay?] you the same amount of money I can pay Mr. Brown for doing the same job, because I can tell you [what he wants?] to do with

this money if he gets it. That kind, I don't know how to label that principle, but I said that was not his responsibility, to try to safeguard tipping. He talked about that quite a bit in his meetings. Dr. Letson, and bless his soul, attorney [Latimer?], were two people who, frankly, ought to take the blame, if there is blame, for the vast majority of white [00:12:00] -- white children (inaudible). Because without having looked at them, without having been in sessions with them where they might have come up with that plan, I think Mr. Letson, and God bless him, [Henry's son?], supported by Latimer, who was 11 years old, (inaudible). And Mr. Latimer came with [his son?], and he proposed to Dr. Letson, and Dr. Letson supported it and presented it as a plan. But I was -- in my perception, my intuition of anything tells me anything, it said those two people are -- they're together on much of what happened in the '60s.

BAYOR: In other words, they went so slow that they allowed the whites to escape? You would suggest a fast policy, those whites who are going to run are going to run anyway.

TATE: Are going to run anyway, that's right.

BAYOR: Yeah.

TATE: Yes.

BAYOR: Let's just integrate...

TATE: Well, to me, it's like, you're going to court, and you're found guilty of something. [13:00] I go to court and I'm found guilty of something. And the judge says, "OK, Dr. Tate, you're guilty. And sheriff, take this man and let him serve his sentence with all of the other (inaudible)." I've always laughed at that (inaudible). And that's what that going slow thing was to me. Now, that was obviously -- wow, obviously, that really is -- that was the philosophy that was used in [those days?]. Go slow, and going slow was not for the purpose of integrating schools, going slow was for the purpose of giving people the chance to leave. I'm as convinced of that everything.

BAYOR: Well, you know, I saw a lot of signs because (inaudible) but I saw a lot of signs, I mean, going through the board of education records, there seems to be a lot of material that suggests that the whole idea was to stall as long as possible so that by the time [00:14:00] that '73 rolled around and Dr. [Primm?] took over, it was 80% black and maybe 20% white. A little quote from you in 1969, you said, "Ever since I have been on the school board, I have not sensed a real integration policy, although I've asked for one, choice, proximity, and space don't constitute practice for integrating -- for circumnavigation of it."

(laughter) Pretty much agree? I mean, do you think there was no real school integration plan during that time?

TATE: I stand by that right now, yeah. That was not -- I used the word that was [not in it?]. Dr. Letson might have been sincere in what he was doing -- you know, I can't tell what a person's makeup is. He might have been sincere in his idea to go slow, keep us from reaching this so-called tipping point, and therefore, whites won't -- I don't know, we don't [00:15:00] have a real school integration plan, he might've been sincere in that. But everything I knew had taught me that it would be just the opposite. And as I say, in 1987, I'm borne out to be right.

BAYOR: Well, see he claims he was right, he claims he went too fast, and was forced by the courts to go too fast, and that he was borne out right, he should've gone slower.

TATE: (inaudible) I've said that he was wrong. You know, he might've been sincere, but yeah. Well, we don't have integration, and for whatever reason, he was the one who was the navigator, well, he was (inaudible) pilot.

BAYOR: No, he was.

TATE: And we don't have it, and I think Dr. Letson's plan was wrong.

BAYOR: Well, how would've been a way to prevent white flight? What do you think could've been done?

TATE: I don’t know, see, I would have no way of knowing whether the people would have [00:16:00] moved out of the community, had we had immediate integration. And how do you prevent white flight? Well, one way to prevent white flight was for blacks never to insist on school integration. Another way to prevent white flight was for blacks not to insist that they ought to have blacks representing them in city government, the school board, and other public positions. That blacks had not felt that they should be -- blacks had not pushed for, had they not insisted that they ought to be eligible for, and a part of the governmental system, I don’t think we would’ve had white flight.

BAYOR: Nope, everything would (inaudible) back to what you had in the ’50s and ’40s. [00:17:00]

TATE: That’s right. So, I mean, that’s what I’m saying. See, from the time I was born, which was 1922, and I’m a Georgian by birth -- my home was Elberton, Georgia. I never left the state, except to study and visit. We had, of course, the status quo. But from 1922 to 1939, when I finished high school, my high school in Elberton and all of the customs, traditions, and mores in Elberton were about the same, ’22 to ’39. Up until ’54, customs, tradition, mores about the same. We didn’t have any white flight in

that time, we didn’t have any white flight in Atlanta until integration. And so, I’d have to say, what are the factors that were prevalent after the Supreme Court [00:18:00] decision that were not there before. And so, that tells us, to me, is that -- well, let me say this to you, I don’t mean to be at all, if I make racist statements, I just make it, I’m not intending to. I have analyzed this school integration situation in several ways. And I have come up with some -- I have come up with, number one, this point. That generally now, when I make these statements -- when I make this statement, I say 80% of people (inaudible) other 20%, it’s not absolute. But generally, white people in America -- and I don’t enjoy it -- but white people in America do not intend for their children to go to school with blacks. That is, in the public elementary and secondary schools. Everything would point [00:19:00] to that. Now, on the college level and the graduate level, they don’t give a damn. But they’re adults then, (inaudible). College level, to a less extent, they’re not as concerned. But on the public school level, they don’t intend for their children to go to school with blacks. Another thing is that white people do not intend to stay in the same neighborhood with blacks. I don’t -- everything...

BAYOR: No, you're right, I mean, that's the way the things can...

TATE: That's the way it is, now, I'm not trying to castigate anybody, but that's the way it goes. I have a -- I won't say, (inaudible) has nothing to do with the -- what you're talking about. But I know some people, I know a black fellow, now, who had -- he had a tremendous job working with one of the big firms in town, started off making $75,000 a year. So, he -- and he [00:20:00] came to Atlanta, and he came to see me, and I said, "Well, you know, congratulations on getting that job and all." And he said, "Where should I move?" I said, "Well, what's your commute? (inaudible), etc." And I notice it took him four or five months to find out where he was going to move. That was -- he said along -- I had already told my wife, I said, "This guy doesn't want to live wherever I live, he wants to live somewhere else." And eventually, when he finally bought his house, he bought his house out in the area off of Highway 285, in the vicinity of the new Northside Hospital. Out there. It's all right, and I think he paid $200,000 for his house. Great, no problem, beautiful house, I've been to it. But within 14 months, he had lost that job he had. [00:21:00] And he has been to me several times, he wants to find another job. And I told

him, I said, “Well, I don’t think you lost that job because of your inefficiency; I think you lost that job because some of your friends didn’t [run?]. And how they treated you.” I said, “Some of your friends haven’t liked it because you’re out there.” And I said, “Now, this is playing a major role, I can’t prove this.”

BAYOR: Sure, sure.

TATE: I can’t prove it, but just as sure as I’m sitting here, and I said this to him, some of your friends were going down and telling your bosses that how you’re doing out there in that community, and see now, they can’t make you not live there, (inaudible) keeps you from buying the place. We are still in a dilemma here, and I’m maybe getting away from school integration, I didn’t intend to lead you in this stretch, but [00:22:00] there are just some basic factors about school integration, and about people’s attitudes and philosophies about race that would make it necessary for me to say that I don’t (inaudible). I mean, many people don’t want (inaudible) on an equal basis.

BAYOR: This is still a segregated city, no doubt about it.

TATE: Oh yes, sure.

BAYOR: I can see it. There was one other thing I came across, I was speaking to some people who were involved in

the SWAP organization back in the ’60s, it was Southwest Alliance for Progress, and they were trying to save the Southwest High School, and integrate it, and (inaudible). And what they told me is that they felt they could’ve kept the whites in the neighborhood, and the whites did stay for a few years if the board of education, the school system, had poured more money into Southwest High, upgraded it. [00:23:00] And instead, they got no help from the school system at all in terms of keeping that school on a certain level that would’ve pleased both, I guess, the whites and the blacks in the neighborhood. In other words, the school deteriorated; whites moved out. Do you see any effort at all on the part of the school system during that time to particularly pay attention to schools in transitional neighborhoods? In other words, keep integrating the community?

TATE: Not over at Southwest, but Northside. (inaudible)

BAYOR: Northside High, yeah.

TATE: Of course, they had busing too, busing black children into Northside in order to keep the school open even now. But they seem to have made a special effort, I guess, because of [Densmore?], or whoever his predecessor was with that -- what’s it called? It’s a special fine arts program, advanced school...

BAYOR: Right, urban (inaudible).

TATE: They made a special effort to have a [00:24:00] special program that would keep that school integrated, but I don't -- that is not due to the integration that's in effect that Northside High School now is there -- is in effect because of the special (inaudible). It is not because of the [district?] math, science, and (inaudible).

BAYOR: Right, it's a magnet school for arts.

TATE: That's right. So, excuse me, I don't consider that to be what I would call bona fide pure school integration. (inaudible) should be in evidence in every school, and children ought to be able to go to those schools on an equal basis. That shouldn't have to be a special program in order to appeal to certain people so the school stays in business.

BAYOR: Well, I found a few cases where the geographic zoning would've suggested the white kids [00:25:00] go to a black elementary -- black high school, a majority black high school, a majority black high school, but because of freedom of choice, they were allowed to go to a nearby white high school, and just avoid integration all together. A lot of that -- a lot of the freedom of choice was used for that, apparently.

TATE: That's right.

BAYOR: How about, Letson talked a lot about the problem of the overcrowded black schools, and he suggested two things, that the schools are so overcrowded that desegregation was doomed right from the start because there were so many black students, they couldn't put them every place without messing up the tipping point, and that was one thing he said. And the other thing he said was that the white schools were already filled, there was no sense making the white schools crowded also, just to siphon off people from the black schools.

TATE: And I even said this, that the black schools were very crowded.

BAYOR: You were on (inaudible).

TATE: But I would (inaudible) and I think it was due to [00:26:00] my insistence that (inaudible) we finally got some (inaudible) in some of these schools, (inaudible) on the side of the main building, in the back of the main building to relieve the overcrowding. I insisted that we didn't -- in some of the black schools, we didn't have -- we did not have classroom space, we didn't have books, we didn't have adequate supplies, and I guess, going along with that, equipment. I went in to many of the schools, and we just didn't have it there. And it was ridiculous to think of a school that was built for 1,600 kids to have

3,200 kids. Now, my response to what you said a minute ago about Dr. Letson saying there were so many children in the black schools, they could transfer them to, I guess, the white schools, and it was doomed from the beginning. Well, integration might've been doomed from the beginning, [00:27:00] but I felt that the overcrowded black schools meant that education was doomed from the beginning. What do you do? Do you try to overhaul integration, and -- integration, that's all that -- integration at the expense of education? In other words, the whole philosophy here would mean to me that the kids were overcrowded, he knew that, and so, if they're overcrowded and the educational offerings are less than they ought to be, that's all right. That's exactly what (inaudible). But if we integrate, and people don't -- white people don't stay and keep their children in school, then that's all wrong. You know, what (inaudible). And so, no, not only in Atlanta school systems, but I used to work the entire state, [00:28:00] so I do have a pretty fair picture of what I saw (inaudible), Elberton, all these other places, and the pattern is about the same.

BAYOR: Yeah, I think so.

TATE: I want to show you something you've been asking about. (inaudible). I'm not going to give it to you, just because

I never did what I wanted to do with it, I still have this, I was looking at it two days ago. (inaudible). It's a record of (inaudible) my enrollment in the school systems of Georgia. Now, you just pick out any one you want, any one, it doesn't make any difference, there are about five in there, I know you would hit on one of the five. There's about five in there where we are employing students and teachers on an equal basis.

BAYOR: This is now...

TATE: What's the date on it?

BAYOR: Eighty-six, OK.

TATE: I have '87, I haven't [00:29:00] completed this yet. Let me show you what I'm talking about, just give you an idea. Let's look at this, let's just take a -- (inaudible). We had 1,764 black kids, 62%, we had 1,100 white kids, 38%. (laughter) Why would I get that? This one was so flagrant, until the fellow didn't punish us a certain way. See? That's the whole black [state?]. When I said the fellow, the superintendent who [cleaned?] this form, didn't fill it out. I know something's wrong there from my experience with him, but let's look at one where they did fill it out. Let's look at -- where is it? (inaudible) Here it is, Bibb had 14,611 black, 10,352

white, so 58% black students, 41% whites. There we go, 605 black [00:30:00] teachers, [748?] white teachers. See?

BAYOR: Yes.

TATE: Now, I saw an article in the paper three days ago where Bibb County can't find black teachers. And I laughed, I said to my wife, I said, excuse me, but I said, "Damn it, I told them 10 years ago, when they wouldn't hire black teachers," I said, "They wouldn't hire black teachers who were coming out of college," and I said, Bibb -- not only Bibb, the entire state, this was a (inaudible). Again, I'm going to excuse 20%, I don't know what 20% it is that I would excuse, but all of the people are not intentionally doing this, but it's a pattern that 10 years ago, 15 years ago, when we had black teachers, and when blacks were interested in teaching, they couldn't do anything else, so we always went to a teacher, but they got so they wouldn't hire them. And I said well, the school boards would not hire black teachers. [00:31:00] The whole effort was, let's get rid of the black teachers, the black teachers don't know -- and this is generalizing -- they don't know anything, they don't know enough to teach whites. We knew enough to teach black students, but we didn't know enough to teach white students. So, we're not going to hire them. So, when black teachers who were black

education majors leaving college, weren't able to find jobs, they began to, number one, gravitate to other professions, other jobs, number two, they stopped going into education. Why was this guy going to school to prepare himself for a field that he can't get a job in.

BAYOR: Or they moved out of state.

TATE: That's right, no. It got to the point where we had 200, 300, 400 blacks under staff, understaffed 200-300. What am I saying, we had 200-300 blacks we ought to have in the system, we don't have, we can't find them. Then, so, we [00:32:00] called a press conference and said to the people, we want some black teachers we can't find. Well, I knew darn well where they would find them. (inaudible). And that's going to be our problem -- going to be a big problem for the next 40 years, it's going to take 40 -- even if we worked on it -- started working on it today, it would take 40 years to get us back to equal employment opportunities in the education profession. And Atlanta -- it just so happens that Atlanta has all of the black teachers it needs, it needs some white teachers because we don't have as many -- what, we don't have a fourth of the white teachers of the Atlanta school system that we ought to have, based on the white students. And I [find?] 6,000-7,000 white students.

BAYOR: Let me ask something else as part of that, I heard reports when the staffs were integrated, that the best black teachers were taken out of the black schools and sent to the white schools.

TATE: That's what they said.

BAYOR: Yeah. [00:33:00]

TATE: Yeah, I mean, that's...

BAYOR: And it wasn't the case with the best white teachers going to the black schools.

TATE: Oh, oh, and this is in the university -- a statewide thing. They would take any outstanding black teacher from an outstanding black schools in the system, send them to top schools.

BAYOR: In the whites?

TATE: In the whites, yeah.

BAYOR: So, the black kids were being deprived even more?

TATE: Yeah, that's right.

BAYOR: That's not a fair deal.

TATE: They took the top teachers, so to speak, and I'm always reluctant to say, because many of the teachers got to the point, when they went to the white schools, they felt that they were superior to the (inaudible), that became the problem. And maybe you and a lot of other people [missed it?], but I looked at it, very concentrated.

And they would get that chest stuck out, and they wouldn't learn before -- 10 years later, many of them were rushing to get -- if they were still able to walk, had enough energy to teach, they wanted to come back to the black schools.

BAYOR: Oh, did they?

TATE: Oh yes, [00:34:00] many of them did. I had a few, you know, again, I'm going 80/20, that's 20%, there are some of them who felt (inaudible).

BAYOR: But the whole thing seemed to be to give the benefits to the white kids.

TATE: That's what it was.

BAYOR: Better teachers, smaller enrollment. None of the white schools were on (inaudible), I remember.

TATE: No, that's right, not a one. Best pupil plan. If they found a black kid, for instance, at Washington High School, who had an exceptionally great soprano voice, that white student -- that black student was allowed to transfer to a white school. They found a football player, you've seen this.

BAYOR: Oh, yes.

TATE: Great football player, you know, they would let him -- I've seen these two, [I would never take that?],

(inaudible). Any black who excelled at anything [00:35:00] in school, it could be art...

BAYOR: Somebody they could use?

TATE: Somebody they could use, that’s right. So, really, that’s right, they degraded the program at the black schools, and integrated the program.

BAYOR: This happened in the ’60s?

TATE: It did.

BAYOR: And for the average black kid who wanted to transfer to the white school, he had a tough time.

TATE: Oh yes, yes.

BAYOR: The efforts to keep black schools in [double session?], do you still think -- do you think there was this effort to maintain the black schools in double sessions while the white schools were being only used -- and I read some place that the student body had to be distributed pretty evenly around the city to have them -- there would be no real reason to build new schools and classrooms, that there were enough spaces in the white schools to take the black overpopulation.

TATE: During the ’60s, I would question whether or not we had enough white schools [00:36:00] to take care the overcrowding of the blacks. But I would say (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yes, that’s what I thought. How about efforts to upgrade black schools to keep the black community happy where they were, so they wouldn’t be interested in going with the whites?

TATE: That effort didn’t come about in wholesale scale until ’56.

BAYOR: Yeah, I heard a lot of things about Supreme Court schools.

TATE: They started upgrading black schools (inaudible) they upgraded our equipment (inaudible).

BAYOR: They had new schools as well.

TATE: Yeah, new schools too.

BAYOR: Everything to keep the black community in the black community.

TATE: In the black community, that’s right, yes.

BAYOR: Let’s talk about one of the people, and he said that as soon as the black community began shifting towards the white neighborhood, and going towards the school, heading that way, the school system would put up a school in that path, a black school, so they would be stuck there and wouldn’t be interested in going to a white school. [00:37:00]

TATE: Yeah, I think that that was (inaudible).

BAYOR: I get it, that -- there was no real commitment to desegregation at all.

TATE: That’s right. There was not the commitment to a desegregation -- desegregated school system that would become (inaudible). There was commitment to enough desegregation to satisfy the Supreme Court decision, so we could show that (inaudible).

BAYOR: Well, I think there were some complaints that Letson only did what the courts told him to do, he never --

TATE: Letson only did what the courts told him, they didn’t do it because -- Letson did only enough to get by, that’s what. Well, as it relates to desegregation.

BAYOR: Well, he didn’t (inaudible) pacify the white, he didn’t pacify --

TATE: Well, yeah, pacifying the whites, that was always -- I had but one of -- [00:38:00] one of the biggest arguments I had with the white superintendent about desegregation was when -- was during the period of desegregation, and I was, as I said, executive director of the State Teachers Association, and I went to make -- we had what we call original meetings, and our meetings was held in Waycross, Georgia, in this particular case, I don’t know whether it was ’65, or ’64, ’63, or ’68. But this association, the Georgia Teachers Association at that time, had developed a

few, four or five little guidelines for handling the schools. So, we said that -- and in our present situation, if you want to -- if you want to put the white principal [00:39:00] over to the black school, as a step one integrating schools, OK, that's all right with us, but let's put the black principal in the white school first. And right down the line, if you want to put four or five black teachers over to the white schools, vice versa, let's do that. And I made a speech down in Waycross, and I said some of what I just told you. Basically, you wanted to put the white principal into the black school, but never cross lines. So, I made the speech, and I got the superintendent of one of the schools in (inaudible) he came to me and said, "You don't quite understand what we're trying to do." He said, "(inaudible) your speech, you don't quite understand what we're trying to do." He said, "You know, the white folk won't accept a black principal in a white school. But the black folk will accept a white principal in a black school." I said, "Well, [00:40:00] you probably don't understand what black folks understand." I said, "Now, maybe I'm not going to say it (inaudible), but they're thinking." I said, "You would put a white principal in a black school because you have the authority to do it." And I said, "There are no blacks within the

board of education department, they're not in the position, they're not the mayor of the city, they're not county commissioners." I said, "They can't stop you from doing it, and you put the white principal in the black school, and you'll be doing it because you have the power. But the black folks aren't accepting it. They can't tell you what I'm trying to tell you now. I said, "You're using my statement rather than yours," and I said, "You might come up with some real integration." I said, "But the way you're going to do it is not to integrate a school." I said, "All you're doing is taking a black principal's job (inaudible)." And I've got 50 more of those examples, I just happened to think about that one.

BAYOR: I guess there was a lot of that. I guess the -- I guess [00:41:00] blacks lost jobs at that time, if they were being --

TATE: Oh, sure, they lost jobs. Let me give you a taste, this has nothing to do with that. Just as -- you may -- you will find a way to work this into your study, you're going to -- (inaudible) somewhere. (laughter) Even, now this was -- this was prevalent throughout Georgia. I'm going to give you the name of this town so you can check it out if you want to, Dalton, Georgia, they had a black school up there, the name of it was Emery, Emery Street

School. I had been to visit that school eight or ten times. And over a period of eight years, the principal -- they had two principals during the eight-year period, I think one, his name was Hightower, and the other one's name was Bush, I think Bush was the last one. In fact, Bush ended up in the central office after the integration. They had asked that they would put a fence [00:42:00] around the school [for class?]. Put a fence around the school to keep what they called the unsavory element off the campus. They had asked for carpeting for their floors in (inaudible), they had asked for. They had asked for an upgrade in their school. So, the principal must've shown me, over the period of eight years, some 60 or 70 [courses?] that used old books and supplies, and how to fix the cafeteria, things like that. It was never done. Eventually, the Dalton school system decided to come up with an integration [plan?]. So, they went to integrate. So, from the end of one school term, which was last of May, first of June, until September, they opened another school, and they decided to integrate. There was a fence up around the black school, the carpeting was all over the school, not only in the library, but all over the school. The lunch room [00:43:00] was fixed up, everything. Within three months, they had done within three months, after they

decided to integrate, what principals had been trying to get them to do eight years. Now, Elberton, my hometown, is a good example of that, Waycross, Georgia is a good example of that. Dalton, Georgia is a good example of that.

BAYOR: Was it an attempt to get the black kids in that school, then, they were trying to fix it up to get the black kids there or what?

TATE: Well, see, the principals, who were black during the time I'm talking in Dalton, they -- the schools were segregated then.

BAYOR: So, this is another...

TATE: And the principals just wanted to get their schools upgraded. They wanted good supplies and equipment, and a good environment conducive to learning.

BAYOR: In other words, once the white kids were being brought in, the...

TATE: That's right. As soon as the white kids were brought in, the fence went up.

BAYOR: Did that happen here too, in Atlanta? Do you know?

TATE: Well, Atlanta, we had a different -- we had sort of [00:44:00] (inaudible) we built this high school, which is still the top (inaudible). We built several other buildings around here, and we've made efforts to transport kids to (inaudible). So, what I'm saying was not as

prevalent in Atlanta. You couldn't see it as easily as you could in the smaller school systems. But that was made before integration, to supply the schools in Atlanta, the school buildings, school books, and (inaudible).

BAYOR: Once the whites were coming into the schools?

TATE: Well, the whites never came into the schools.

BAYOR: I know, once the -- once the --

TATE: No, I think at the time -- they just saw that it was -- I won't say that was done (inaudible), because Letson, I don't think he did things, (inaudible). It was, you know -- if there weren't enough books in the school, [00:45:00] I think he just decided that we need to have some books over there, and started putting them there. I won't say that it was for the purpose of forestalling integration, because there was no great effort in Atlanta to transfer children from the black community to the white community schools until Letson -- until somebody came up with this M to M plan.

BAYOR: Yeah, which came later.

TATE: Yeah, came later. And so, I won't say that it was done [alone?] for that purpose. The biggest thing that happened in Atlanta, as far as I am concerned, was that proximity, capacity, and choice, and also, giving the white

adults enough time to move out of the school (inaudible). I had a person once --

BAYOR: Let me just check the recorder.

(break in audio)

TATE: (inaudible) [00:46:00] lesson, were going to transfer black kids (inaudible) -- it was over at the Price High School -- they would transfer black kids -- (inaudible) now for the white principal at Price High School.

BAYOR: This is about, what, ’60s, mid-’60s?

TATE: This would’ve had to be back in ’63, ’64.

BAYOR: OK.

TATE: Because I wasn’t on the school board, and I was on the school board in ’65. And I heard about this, and a PTA meeting was held over at (inaudible). Well, the district PTA meeting was held in Atlanta, and I was the main speaker. Dr. Letson preceded me at the school board, and he told (inaudible) one thing in [Macon?] was [00:47:00] Price High School, they’re going to change the principal from black to white. They had no plans, again, for changing the (inaudible). And I did something I’ve never done before in my life, I don’t think I’ve done since, I completely forgot the speech, completely didn’t give the speech that I planned to give, and I just talked for a few minutes. And in essence, I was saying to the parents --

and the audience was 99% black -- I said to them, “I don’t know how many of you agree with Dr. Letson’s plan,” but I said, “He was right.” I said, “(inaudible) yes, they’re right. God bless him for sitting there,” I said, “I want him to hear what I’m saying.” I said, “I’m sorry, I hope I don’t insult him.” But I said, “Number one, Dr. Letson, this is one time that we are not going to accept the transfer of a white principal to Price High School, unless you can come up with a plan to integrate white -- the white schools.” I said, “We’re not going to accept that,” I said, “I’m going to test my so-called [00:48:00] leadership ability and see whether (inaudible).” And I said, “I’m here to tell you today that we’re not going to stand for it. We’ll just -- we need -- we’re not going to stand for it.” And I said, “This may be your way of integrating the schools, and you may -- how you do it, and you may be sincere with your plan,” I said, “But I don’t see it. Sincere to me would mean, if you can put a white man over at Price High School, you can take the principal from Price High School and put him over into the white school.”

BAYOR: What was his reaction?

TATE: His reaction was red-faced, negative.

BAYOR: Didn’t do it?

TATE: He didn’t do it. No, he never did.

BAYOR: I mean, did he put the white in Price, or he didn’t do anything?

TATE: He didn’t do it, he didn’t do it.

BAYOR: I’m also curious about your opinion on the school compromise of ’73. You know, the -- what is it called -- when they brought in [Cram?], but also, they pretty much gave up the idea of busing, and they pretty much agreed to bring black administrators in, as opposed to trying to desegregate [00:49:00] the school system anymore. Do you think that was the only thing that could’ve been done at that time, given the -- ?

TATE: What I would say is, that, as I remember that, now, I was pleased -- I was in agreement with the need for more blacks in higher -- I didn’t -- yes?

(49:25 - 49:52 interruption to conversation not transcribed)

BAYOR: So, the school compromise...

TATE: You have to -- in order for me to answer that as objective [00:50:00] as I know how you have to (inaudible) because the biggest thing I remember about this now was that the city wanted to get additional administrators, black administrators (inaudible). I agreed with that, I agreed with getting additional administrators, I agreed with placing blacks in top administrative positions. I

didn’t agree with the total aspect of how it was going to be done, and I don’t remember now what it was that --

BAYOR: Well, I remember the NAACP got all upset about it because, yeah, they felt that they were pushing for the busing scheme, trying to just integrate on that basis, and I think Lonnie King felt that there weren’t enough white students to bus anymore, and a lot of black parents didn’t want their kids being bused. So, instead of doing that, instead of emphasizing the students, to emphasize the administration, at least [00:51:00] they’ll get control over the school board, and the system to make the policy.

TATE: Well, that aspect, I agree with. I would say that I agree with many aspects of (inaudible) plan. Some. But I can’t (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah, I was curious, also, you’ve been executive secretary of the Georgia Teachers -- Teachers Association.

TATE: That was a black association at that time, from ’61 till ’70, I was the executive director of the black -- statewide Black Educators Association.

BAYOR: And that was a network of teachers and anybody in the education field?

TATE: Anybody in the education profession.

BAYOR: OK.

TATE: And in ’70, the two statewide associations, black and white, merged. So, we had the Georgia Education Association, and the Georgia Teachers and Education Association. We merged in 1970. And as usual, I became the associate of the merged group. And I remained associated [00:52:00] [exec?] until 1977. Then I became the executive secretary of the merged association in ’77, and remained that until ’82 [time?].

BAYOR: And so how long have you been state senator from (inaudible).

TATE: I was elected state senator in ’74. But I was holding the position of state senator and executive secretary from (inaudible).

BAYOR: OK, the school system -- you know, I agree in terms of what Letson seemed to be doing during that time. I saw it as a very slow process, this whole grade a year plan seemed to be something that, you know, first of all, you don’t start from the --

TATE: Top.

BAYOR: -- top, you start from the bottom.

TATE: You start from the bottom, that’s right.

BAYOR: And I couldn’t understand why they were starting from...

TATE: Well, I sat down once, I don't know what time it was, but I sat down once and said that if we were to put -- sure, if you put students [00:53:00] in the 12th grade this year, I think (inaudible) blacks, and they come to the white school. You just got (inaudible). So, they graduate at the end of that year to leave you with none. So, the next year, you go -- I assume you put 30 in the 12th grade, and 30 in the 11th grade. And so, this second year, the ones in 12th grade graduate, and then the 11th grade, you (inaudible). So, I figured it would take 20 years -- I think it was 20 years, and I'd have to go back. I have this somewhere, I had planned to write on it; but I have never done it.

BAYOR: You should.

TATE: I'm sorry, I feel ashamed of myself for not having done it. But it would have taken -- I believe 21 years to get blacks in every school, every grade in the school, as opposed to 11 years, if we did first, second, and [on up?].

BAYOR: I think [00:54:00] it probably would've been more accepted on a first grade basis.

TATE: Oh, sure.

BAYOR: You know, rather than the years when everybody starts dating, I guess, that's when parents get uptight about that.

TATE: [That’s true?]. And also, that, to me, showed that the gentleman who proposed that, whoever they were who proposed it, were not sincere about integrating.

BAYOR: Well, that was before Letson.

TATE: (inaudible) before Letson, OK?

BAYOR: It really was before him, I mean, he kept it -- I mean, he didn’t move beyond the courts, you know, he just did what the courts told him to do, pretty much. And...

TATE: Yeah.

BAYOR: (inaudible)

TATE: Yeah, OK, well, yeah, well, (laughter) I always end up with the problem -- as I get older, when I was younger, I didn’t have any problems, I didn’t have any problems about (inaudible), when I was younger, I said (inaudible). [00:55:00] I tried to give the person the benefit of the doubt, and that’s why you hear me say (inaudible). He might have been personally sincere, but his plan wasn’t -- his plan didn’t show it. That his plan to integrate the school districts was (inaudible). I think he was a smart man, none of this takes away from his ability to operate schools, that I had no problem. He had the ability [to think very well?], he organized well.

BAYOR: Because he saw himself as between the black community that wanted immediate desegregation, and the white

community that didn’t want anything. He saw himself as being in the middle between two hostile groups. I guess, in some ways he was.

TATE: And he came up with a plan that I’m assuming came out of his mind. [00:56:00] (inaudible). But he apparently did not confer with black educators, who might have (inaudible).

BAYOR: A big shame. I don’t know if Benjamin Mays was involved, but --

TATE: Well, Benjamin -- no, Clements was the black man on the school board, and he was the [fair head?] fellow who basically was not attuned to black wishes and designs, etc.

BAYOR: He just wanted to get along?

TATE: That’s right. When I got on the board -- it wasn’t until Dr. Clements died, Dr. Clements died, I don’t know if he had a heart attack or not, but it was a sudden death. It wasn’t until Dr. Clements died that I was even recognized as being a [00:57:00] -- bona fide recognized as being a member of that board, despite the fact that when I was on the board, I had a doctorate degree, and I had more experience than Clements with the public school system.

BAYOR: You were on the same time Clements was on the board?

TATE: Oh yes, but I was -- Clements was there first. Clements was there when I became a member of the board. I

became a member of the board in ’65, and if I recall correctly, Dr. Clements -- Dr. Clements was on the board, that I recall.

BAYOR: I think he was on the board from the ’50s, I think.

TATE: Probably late ’50s or something. But I think he was first [appointed?] the board in (inaudible). But basically, he was there, that’s what it amounted to. He was there.

BAYOR: He didn’t challenge.

TATE: Can I tell you something that doesn’t have to do with integration? You might want to cut that off. You might -- then you may -- I don’t care (inaudible).

BAYOR: OK, go.

TATE: (laughter) I became a member of the Atlanta School Board in ’65, and after I became a member of the board, [00:58:00] someone challenged me, challenged my right to serve. Now, challenging my right to serve came about [like this?]. This fellow that I won over had stated publicly that he wasn’t interested in serving anymore. I’ve forgotten his name, but he was a well-respected white fellow. But he had said in the newspaper, in the press, said that he wasn’t particularly interested in serving as this particular district representative any longer. And if anybody qualified against -- anybody qualified for the

position, probably wouldn't qualify. So, I saw that (inaudible). So, I was the first black person to run -- now, Clements was on that. I said, I don't think Clements ran initially, but anyway, I ran for the position. [00:59:00] I went down to [qualify?]. And when I got there, I think it was the last day, I should've (inaudible), qualified on the last day, and the gentleman who said he wasn't going to run was there. And I saw him, I said, "Well, I saw that you said you wouldn't qualify somebody else who decided they wanted the position, so I've come here to qualify, I want to inform you of that." He said, "You're going to qualify?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Well, since I'm down here," he said, "I think I'm (inaudible)." I said, "That wasn't what you said." He said, "Now that I just -- I think I'm qualified." I said, "Well, I want you to know that you have opposition." And I went (inaudible) [01:00:00]. After he went on and qualified, I guess I had some doubts about whether I could [get it?], but I didn't [fall?]. After the qualifying deadline was over at 5:00 that evening, he qualified, he had no opposition. Next week, there were two or three fellows who qualified -- excuse me, who complained that they wanted to qualify for some position on the board and city council, but they didn't have the money. They filed

suit in court, Judge [Pie's?] court. Judge Pie ruled that people should not be kept from qualifying positions because they had (inaudible). So, he opened [01:01:00] the qualifying rules, he declared everybody qualified, null and void, he opened the books again. I don't know whether it was one week or two weeks. So, during this time, I went down, I decided then that I was going to run. I said, this second chance, I guess the Lord opened it for me, that's what I (inaudible). I went down with my money, I'll paid my qualifying fee, and qualified. And the other fellows, who Judge Pie had opened the books for, they qualified, but they didn't pay anything. So, when the books closed, I was -- so, I qualified [and met him?]. OK, now, when I won the position, I beat my opponent by 8,000 votes. And he was well (inaudible). Now, after I got on the board, Dr. Letson -- it was -- I can't prove this, but I know he was behind it. Dr. Letson (inaudible), because see, this was a time when I had had the [tussle?] with him over at that PTA meeting I was telling you about.

BAYOR: Yeah.

TATE: And [01:02:00] several other things, that's always --

BAYOR: You think he put the other guy up to it, the white guy up to it, to qualify to run against you?

TATE: I don’t know, that he might have -- the guy who was on the board, who was already on the board, I don’t know whether he -- he probably did, but no, what he put somebody up to was filing suit to keep me from sitting. At this point, I’m trying to get into the --

BAYOR: On what basis?

TATE: Oh, on the basis that I qualified during the interim, the interim between the time that the judge opened the books, and I should’ve -- if I were really bona fide, I should’ve qualified initially, and I didn’t do it. And so, OK. We held a meeting -- this is -- I said, that is background, I’ll tell you that I was at home one Sunday morning, and I got a call from somebody who was calling for Dr. Letson. Dr. Letson wanted all board members to meet out to the Instructional Services Center out on Highway I-75, it used to be the old Chrysler place. How long have you been around?

BAYOR: [01:03:00] Fourteen years.

TATE: Oh, then you know something about it anyways.

BAYOR: Yeah.

TATE: The Instruction Services Center was out here, and that was the old Chrysler Building. But we held a meeting out there. We never held a board meeting out there before, to my knowledge. So, my first thought, “Why the hell are we

going out there, and why aren't we downtown?" But I said OK. The meeting was going to be at two or three o'clock on a Sunday. And I said, "All right, I'll be there." So, three o'clock, meeting started, I think it was (inaudible). Everybody was there. So, Dr. Letson -- and Dr. Clements was not the chairman of the board that -- I believe it was (inaudible) Cook, Ed Cook was chairman of the board -- Ed Cook opened the meeting, and he turned it over to Dr. Letson immediately. Dr. Letson said, "Well, we called this meeting for the purpose [01:04:00] of trying to straighten out a little something that's bothering several members of the board and people in the community." He said, "But I want to turn it over to Dr. Clements and let Dr. Clements explain what it's all about." So now, the meeting was all about this. He said, "Well, Dr. Tate, the meeting is really called about your situation." I said, "What is my situation?" He said, "Well, there is a little haze over your right to be on the board, whether or not you're on the board. Somebody has filed a suit, you know, to challenge your seat, and whether or not you should be here." And this was -- now, we were sworn in on January 5th, I believe that this was about, I guess, February or March. And so, I have a way of [asking for?] a few things. [01:05:00] I said, "Well, Dr. Clements, let me see if I can (inaudible).

This meeting is called because of me? You want to ask me -- or have something to say about my position on the board?" He said, "Yes," he (inaudible) himself. "Well, there's some people who wonder whether or not you are a bona fide board member, and whether you ought to be sitting here with all of us voting as well. What we'd like for you to do is to step aside until the courts finally decide."

BAYOR: (laughter)

TATE: And I said, "I may (inaudible)," I said, "What would you like for [me to do?]?" And then I think Dr. Letson (inaudible). So, I said, "Well, I hope I understand what you fellows were asking, but maybe you all haven't dealt with (inaudible) before." I said, "I want to tell you what; I [ain't?] going to step aside for that." I said, "Let me ask you a few questions." I said, "Number one, how many votes did you get, Dr. Clements?" And he got (inaudible) [01:06:00] fewer votes than I did. I said, "How many did you get? How many (inaudible)?" I wasn't being naïve, but I was being sarcastic with them, adamant, really. And I asked all of them, "How many votes you get?" I said, "When were you all sworn in to being in this board?" I said, "Let's see, well, that's why you're saying that?" And I said, "How in the heck do you expect me to step aside and have a judge decide that I'm entitled to

hold a seat that I'm already holding?" I said, "That'd be stupid, you don't think I'm that stupid, do you?" We had a nice interesting discussion [between friends?] over there.

BAYOR: Did they drop it?

TATE: They dropped it. They didn't drop the suit, no. They said -- I'll tell you what did happen, there was a fellow on the board named Mrs. Sarah Mitchell. Sarah Mitchell and I, really, I think, wanted to integrate schools. But if anybody else wanted to integrate schools, I don't know if they didn't (inaudible).

BAYOR: Clements didn't want to integrate schools?

TATE: Who?

BAYOR: Clements, he didn't want to integrate?

TATE: No. [01:07:00] Clements -- well, if he did, he never showed it. Clements wanted to do whatever Letson did.

BAYOR: He was his voice?

TATE: That's right.

BAYOR: So, in other words, he didn't want a black guy --

TATE: He didn't want to block -- he would always find a way to support Letson. Letson (inaudible).

BAYOR: OK, so he didn't -- Letson didn't want a black man on the board who would speak up?

TATE: That's it. That's the whole thing. And like I said, Mrs. Mitchell was -- Mrs. Mitchell was a white lady, but

she was -- I'm going to use the word, objective, in her thinking. (inaudible) what I would call objective. That's what I tried to do. But it just so happens that I think it was because black folks were the ones who always got the worst things, the raw deals, and they got progress to go, and all to make up, so, you know, I had to express that point of view. But I said to them, "No, I'm not going to step aside." And so then, Mitchell said, "Well, Dr. Tate, I want you to know one thing, that I wasn't for this meeting." See, they knew what the meeting was about, I didn't, I was just asked to come. She said, "I want to talk to you," and said, "I told them that it wasn't necessary, but I came on because (inaudible) the [01:08:00] board." And so, Mr. [Shell?] said, "Dr. Tate, I want you to know the same thing." He said, "I can't believe (inaudible)." He said, "But I ain't for that position." And eventually, one other person, there were eight or nine [members?]. Eventually, I think Dr. Letson and Mr. Clements said, "Well, gentlemen, we came to solve the problem." He said, "You're not going to step down, so I guess that's all we can do."

BAYOR: So, you were the second black on the board...

TATE: Second black on the board.

BAYOR: Who was the third? [Yancy?], was he the third?

TATE: Yeah, that’s right, Yancy.

BAYOR: How was he, how was he in terms of speaking for the black community? Was he --

TATE: Not as -- he was not (inaudible) service. (inaudible) But now, you may know something about black-white, and white -- black folk and white folk, [01:09:00] you may not know too much about customs, traditions, and (inaudible) general class status, Clements was not from the same kind of black status that [I?] was from. Now, my focus was on churchgoing people, (inaudible) people. We didn’t have the status. My daddy was in the (inaudible), and nobody bothered him because he was a working man, he took care of (inaudible) his [children?]. But Clements came from the home of a bishop, his daddy was a bishop. But I’ll put it this way, whatever black folks had, from the standpoint of status, I guess, houses, and (inaudible), Clements came in (inaudible).

BAYOR: He was the elite guy?

TATE: That’s right. So -- and so, I said Clements, also Yancy. [01:10:00]

BAYOR: Yancy, too?

TATE: Yes, both of them. And see, not until I left several years later, they get some black folk on the board. You’ve got [D. F. Lever?] now, which they don’t like, and you’ve

got -- and then you got -- well, they have had some black folk on -- some blacks -- some guys who know what black problems are on the board.

BAYOR: Yeah, it’s funny, when I spoke to Letson, I tell him it must be -- there’s some of the people who were on the board during that time, and I mentioned your name. He said, “Well, he thinks a better person to speak to might be Yancy.”

TATE: Oh, sure.

BAYOR: (laughter)

TATE: Sure!

BAYOR: Speak to Yancy.

TATE: They fought to carry his point of view, with Yancy.

BAYOR: That’s why I knew I had to speak to you.

TATE: (laughter) Well, Yancy -- now, I want to say here again, see, Yancy was a product of his environment.

BAYOR: He’s a doctor, right?

TATE: Indeed, a medical doctor. That’s what he is now, that’s what he was when he got on the board. And well, so they -- I never [01:11:00] [saw?] Clements either, I could tell that was a lie. Just like my daddy said, (inaudible). My point is, he might’ve had a Packard car, or an Oldsmobile, or whatever, a Buick, and my daddy had a Chevrolet. Clements, and I don’t think that they quite --

they didn’t quite see the black (inaudible). See, I went to the board, also, with not only my own background, but a background of having worked with schools all over the state, and black and white situations. I knew about them, and some of them didn’t have this background.

BAYOR: Well, he sounded like he wanted -- Letson wanted people he could just browbeat. He wanted people who would speak his line, not people who would object to him.

TATE: That’s right.

BAYOR: Yeah.

TATE: That’s right. They built a school over -- they built Douglas High School over there. You can go check that out now. They built a school and they didn’t put any -- there [01:12:00] may be four or five little windows around the whole school. And they came up with the idea of the school, I said, “Look, I know I’m not living in the Dark Ages,” and I said, “I think I’m as morbid as anybody else.” I said, “Who in the hell ever heard of a school -- I can’t remember the -- who the hell ever heard of a school building, a whole school building constructed, and no windows?” I said, “This is ridiculous.” That was one concept that came up.

BAYOR: Why was that?

TATE: That was a new trend, some architect came up with this plan. I said, “Well, (inaudible) on the north side.” I said, “Put that in north side, let’s see if the people dig it out there.” But I voted nay, and they went on and put the school building up. Now, they’re trying to get some windows out there. They came up with the open classroom concept. I’ve been a school man all of my life. I said, “Gentlemen, the open classroom concept might work in communities where the children are really middle class and up, [01:13:00] aristocratic kind of kids.” I said, “But that ain’t going to work in the Atlanta school system if you’re going to educate kids from the lower socioeconomic strata. You don’t need the open classrooms.” I said, “You’ve got to have a situation where these kids can be enclosed like they have been for years, so the teacher can get to them, or work with them, without a lot of distraction.”

BAYOR: So, you think this was racial decisions they were making? Do you think --

TATE: I want to say that the -- I’m not going to say that Douglas High School was a racial situation, I think Douglas High School was just the brainchild of some architect who wanted to come up with a new plan. But the open classroom concept for kids in the lower socioeconomic strata, I would

want to think that, you know -- I'm not going to say it was totally racial, just a new concept that wasn't really --

BAYOR: But they tried it first here?

TATE: Oh yes, they tried it, they tried it here in Atlanta. Yeah, open classroom concept. Now, now [01:14:00] they're trying to -- with this plan, they're trying to put partitions in the school lounge.

BAYOR: Back to that.

TATE: That's right. And the people have decided now that they aren't worth it.

BAYOR: Let me go to another topic.

TATE: OK.

BAYOR: You were the first black candidate for mayor in 1969.

TATE: Right.

BAYOR: I was curious why some of the black community supported Massell over you? What was the basis for that?

TATE: Because four people in this (inaudible). [Eddie Kim?], Leroy Johnson, Sam Williams, Jesse [Lee?], in essence, got together about two or three days before the election, made a television appearance, Leroy and Jesse, they had become the head of [LSO?], in which they got on the television, got on the airwaves [01:15:00] and said that (inaudible) that basically, Dr. Tate's a good guy, he's a fine guy, he's made a great contribution to

education, [and so forth?]. But he can't win the position of mayor of the city, and we would like for you all to vote for the next best candidate who can, Massell. And the next best candidate was Massell.

BAYOR: So, they thought it was too early for a black to become mayor in 1969, I guess?

TATE: That, I'm not going to say they didn't, I'm not going to say that wasn't [important to know?], I think they were jealous. They knew that I had the black -- I had the black community behind me until they said that. And they were with me, there were more than -- 90% of the blacks in Atlanta had decided to vote for me until they made that appearance. Well, I didn't have the status that Daddy King -- and I wasn't [01:16:00] try to fight it, (inaudible). Sam Williams, did you interview Sam?

BAYOR: Oh, yeah.

TATE: Well, yeah, and Leroy, Leroy was a senator.

BAYOR: Yeah, we've spoken to him.

TATE: And they had status. And if each one was able to siphon off 3,000 votes.

BAYOR: They said they were putting all of their support behind Maynard Jackson, for vice-mayor, that was the deal?

TATE: I don’t know, at that time, they might have been, but I don’t -- [Signada?] was the vice -- he ran for vice mayor.

BAYOR: Yeah, I know, I mean --

TATE: Of course, you know it’s no problem to get a -- if you’ve got a -- if you and I were to go out here and -- you and I could run for governor and lieutenant governor, right now. As long as you’re running for governor.

BAYOR: Gotcha.

TATE: You can get me in as --

BAYOR: I just thought maybe they thought it was too soon for the whites to accept a black mayor, and a black vice mayor.

TATE: It was too soon for the blacks to, [01:17:00] as far as Leroy, Daddy King, Sam Williams, [Jess Hill?] were concerned. It was too soon for the blacks to elect Horace Tate, who didn’t go to them to ask them may I run. Well, I didn’t ask them because I had -- I had a greater black following at that time, (inaudible) because of my position (inaudible). And I don’t know, I can’t prove that either, but I...

BAYOR: Well, you got the votes.

TATE: Yeah.

BAYOR: I mean, you got the black votes.

TATE: I showed that -- yeah, I got votes, and you know, I beat -- as I said, when I ran for board of education, I got the biggest vote that's ever been gotten against anybody. I won that thing, and my opponent got 20 -- (inaudible) eight. And I got some white votes out of there, so all of my votes weren't black.

BAYOR: So, you think because they didn't make the choice, that you were --

TATE: They didn't mean to say -- they were looking for -- if Leroy had been the candidate at that time, [01:18:00] initially, they would've said let's help Leroy.

BAYOR: OK. So, you weren't part of their inner circle?

TATE: No, I wasn't, I never have been, I never desired to be in.

BAYOR: But was there pressure from the white community, though, on you to drop out of the race, or not to run? You didn't hear anything from Ivan Allen, or those people, or...

TATE: Oh, Ivan was neutral, you know, as far as I (inaudible). Have you read Ivan's book?

BAYOR: Yeah, I've spoken to him, too.

TATE: Did you see anything in there about Ivan -- did you see a statement in there that at least implied that if blacks stuck with me, I would've won?

BAYOR: Oh, I didn’t see that.

TATE: They said that.

BAYOR: I know he didn’t like Massell, I know that.

TATE: There was something in there about that. Ivan told me that -- you know, after the election, he told me that -- I don’t know whether it was two weeks after or three weeks after, he said, “You know, we knew -- we took a poll three months before the election, that showed you in fourth place.” [01:19:00] He said, “We took a poll two months before the election and you were in third place. We took a poll a month before the election, you were in second place. We took a poll one week before the election, you were in second place, but you were gaining by surge -- leaps and bounds. If you had -- if the momentum for you had continued the last week, like it did one week before the election, you would have beat your nearest opponent with an 8,000-vote margin, without a runoff.” That’s what Ivan told me. See, I didn’t have money for any polls.

BAYOR: So, he would’ve liked to back you, if he was wanting to --

TATE: He never opposed me, as far as I know.

BAYOR: Yeah, OK.

TATE: Ivan never opposed me -- never said any negative thing about me, and I never saw him give me (inaudible). But I

didn’t have the [01:20:00] -- maybe, the sophistication that was necessary to be a real bona fide pure politician, you know, at that time. And even though I think I have it now, there’s still something in me that doesn’t allow me to -- some people usually go to wheel and deal, (inaudible), yeah, I don’t believe in that. I don’t believe in getting a position I don’t (inaudible). I didn’t then, I still don’t. Because I can’t do -- I can’t do -- I haven’t been able to bring myself around to doing some of the things that I have heard that other politicians did in order to get elected. And I didn’t -- I still believe it, you know, I am in a prolific position to do some good. That’s what I believe, I may be wrong.

BAYOR: Oh yeah, and in ’73, you didn’t want to try it again, I guess. I guess by that time --

TATE: Oh no, I was -- [01:21:00] see, I accomplished what I was trying to accomplish. Because I was running for mayor and was trying to win. So, the more -- so, that’s it. But I wanted to also prove that a black could get elected, and that it was time -- people would elect a black. And I -- that’s what was (inaudible).

BAYOR: Of course, by ’73, the blacks were the majority of registered voters in Atlanta. So, by ’73, certainly, they had the votes.

TATE: Oh, yes. But you see, before that time, there were some people who had the idea that a black might not be able to win, [blacks who said whites were needed?]. But see, after my -- there were a lot of blacks in Atlanta the day after the election who, sensing how close I was to winning, and knowing that they switched their vote because of Leroy, Jessie, and Daddy King, and who was the other -- those four [01:22:00] people, that they said to me that, you know, those fools led us down the wrong path, you could've won the position. I had any number back there, you could've won. They said, "I didn't vote for you, but it wasn't because I didn't like you, I didn't vote for you because I felt they were right."

BAYOR: Were you part of the event, the Negro Voters League, were you active in that at all?

TATE: Say what?

BAYOR: Atlanta Negro Voters League?

TATE: You know, (inaudible).

BAYOR: But you weren't a part of that ruling coalition that --

TATE: They didn't ever (inaudible).

BAYOR: I mean, that was Leroy Johnson, that was Daddy King, that was (inaudible).

TATE: No, I didn't have any part in that.

BAYOR: And even Maynard Jackson, I mean, his grandfather was Dobbs, so...

TATE: Well, Maynard Jackson -- yeah, Maynard Jackson's granddad was a bona fide black (inaudible).

BAYOR: Yeah?

TATE: And I told Maynard, when he ran for mayor, I said, "You know, I want you to know that I'm going to support you, but it ain't because of you or what you're doing, because you're (inaudible). I'm going to support you because [of your granddad?]." Then he asked me something about it, [01:23:00] because he didn't know what his granddaddy was trying to do when it came to political activity. Dobbs was a real black leader who was on quality -- he was the greatest [guy?], years before Maynard -- I guess when Maynard was a boy. And so, Maynard got a lot of votes because of his granddad.

BAYOR: That's how it works.

TATE: It does. But I think Maynard (inaudible) basically did all right as mayor.

BAYOR: Oh yeah, yeah.

TATE: I will vote for him again sometime. He's going to run again.

BAYOR: I hope he runs again.

TATE: (inaudible)

BAYOR: I hope he runs again.

TATE: Yeah.

BAYOR: Well, thanks a lot, that’s...

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