

### SS301.mp3

This is tape 2 of our interview with Dan Powell. The interviewers are Carol Lynn Yellin, Joan Beifuss. The date is November 19, 1971. We are interviewing at the home of Dan Powell.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And Dan, when we left off on the other tape, you were saying Crump's reluctance to support Stewart for the Senate.

Dan Powell: Yeah, Crump let it be known early that he would not support Stewart. And I think that Mr. Crump felt that if Stewart realized he was not going to support him, he wouldn't run for reelection. The reasoning Crump didn't support him, so I learned from some of his lieutenants, was that Crump didn't think that Stewart could be reelected, even with his support, remembering how close Stewart had come to defeat in 1942 when he ran the first time. So, at that time Willie Gerber; Frank Rice was dead, Willie Gerber was then the chief of the Crump forces in town. So, Gerber talked him into supporting a man that Crump had never met, Judge Mitchell from Middle Tennessee, one of those (muffled) Middle Tennessee candidates. And, Crump announced his support for Mitchell. Pub Wallace and some of the others in the state organization, state establishment, had obligations to Stewart. They were interested in a gas pipeline, and they decided to go ahead with Stewart, regardless of what Crump did. So, with this support, Stewart announced that he was seeking reelection. Estes Kefauver also announced that he was running for the senate. Kefauver came to Memphis to try to build up support. It was recommended to Kefauver before he came to Memphis that he not name any one person as his campaign manager here, because if he did, Crump would completely destroy that person, even if he could get a person to stick out his neck and take his campaign against Mr. Crump's opposition -- that Crump would destroy one man. The idea was to get as many prominent men in this city as he could to serve as a Kefauver Committee, with no one man as a manager. And this was the strategy that was developed down here. And he came down here, and he got Ed (muffled), he got Henry Gotten.

Joan Beifuss: Who was Henry Gotten?

Dan Powell: He was a doctor, he is a doctor here. He got Ed Dalstrom. He got Mr. Barr, who I believe now is dead; and several others, prominent business men here in town, some of whom had been with Crump, to serve on his committee. You see Kefauver, at the time that he ran for the senate two years before that, or the year before that he had been chosen *Collier's Magazine* as the outstanding congressman in the whole Congress of the United States; and he had written a book on the reorganization of Congress, (muffled). So, Kefauver was not just a politician, he was a man of some stature in the congress and in politics. So, they agreed to serve as his campaign committee. And, this was the first time anything like that has ever happened. This was the first time in over 25 years that a number of prominent businessmen here had supported a candidate against a candidate Crump was supporting. So, as the campaign progressed, a number of things happened...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Who was Crump...Crump was not supporting Stewart?

Dan Powell: No, he was supporting Mitchell.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Mitchell, yeah.

Joan Beifuss: Is this the pri -- is this the Democratic primary?

Dan Powell: Democratic primary.

Joan Beifuss: Ok. So, it's a three-way primary?

Dan Powell: Yeah, in those days the Democratic primary was the election.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was the election.

(muffled)

Dan Powell: So, Crump was supporting Mitchell. The rest of the state organization, the rest of the establishment, was supporting Stewart. Now Crump and the others were together on McCord, Pub Wallace and this group were together with Crump on McCord. So the campaign began and ran its course. The feel in the Kefauver camp was that Crump would drop Mitchell, get Mitchell out of the race, and then go to Stewart in the closing days. We knew if this happened, Kefauver could not be elected.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Where was COPE? You were in the Kefauver camp?

Dan Powell: Right. I spent almost my entire time in Tennessee during that primary campaign. And see, I would put up a substantial amount of money in the Kefauver campaign that was contributed directly to the Kefauver campaign. We probably had the greatest activity we had ever had in the labor movement behind Kefauver. The AF of L supported him, too. Everywhere, except here in Memphis, and I think even here in Memphis some of them supported him.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Which meant a break with Crump in this case for the AF of L.

Dan Powell: You recall the thing that happened here -- Crump ran a full page ad in both papers accusing Estes Kefauver of being the kind of man who would milk his neighbor's cow through the crack in the fence. And, then he called in that ad a pet coon, so Kefauver retorted that he might be a pet coon, but he wasn't Mr. Crump's pet coon. So then he put on the coonskin cap.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And this became his trademark.

Dan Powell: In Tennessee, the state of Davy Crockett, the coonskin cap, this gave Estes

a great deal of identity and support from the state.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Where did that idea come from? Do you know?

Dan Powell: I don't know, recall who in the campaign suggested it.

Carol Lynn Yellin: It was really one of those strokes of genius.

Dan Powell: Yeah, but it happened, and as I say the fear was that Crump would get Mitchell out of the race, and then he would go to Stewart in the closing days of the campaign. And, this didn't happen, however, much to our relief.

Joan Beifuss: He stayed with him?

Dan Powell: He stayed with Mitchell. And, Kefauver was the high man and won the nomination.

Joan Beifuss: Who came in second?

Dan Powell: Carmack was second. Mitchell was a poor third, but if you had combined the Mitchell/Stewart -- Stewart was second, Mitchell was a poor third. Had you combined the Mitchell/Stewart vote, you would have beaten Kefauver. At the same time, Browning defeated McCord. Now this defeat ended Crump's real influence in the state of Tennessee. He was never again the power statewide that he had been before. It did not end his influence in Shelby County. Down here Kefauver did not carry the county, but as I recall, he got about 30,000 votes, which was far more than any candidate had ever pulled in this county before. Kefauver ran a better race down here by far than McCord did. Not McCord, but Browning, because Browning did not have the same sort of organization that Kefauver had. About the only person that Browning had for him was Taylor.

Joan Beifuss: Well now, in an (muffled) I guess we are talking about Kefauver election year -- where is the black vote in an election like this?

Dan Powell: This was the first election that the black vote really became a factor. The black vote here, I would say two-thirds of it in that election went to Kefauver.

Joan Beifuss: Who was leading it?

Dan Powell: Uh, Reverend McDaniel was one of them.

Joan Beifuss: Or who were you working with in the black community?

Dan Powell: We were working with Reverend McDaniel. We were working with some of the ministers. We were working with Maceo Walker, the one who is the senior.

Joan Beifuss: You mean the one, the father of the one who was shot.

Dan Powell: Yeah, the one who was killed. And, we were working with some of the ministers. This was way before the days of Willis and Sugarman. And, the black vote before that had been kept small, and Crump had controlled it. He controlled it mainly through Lieutenant Lee.

Joan Beifuss: What about Blair Hunt?

Dan Powell: Blair Hunt was superintendent of the schools, and he came out of the Lee grouping. Superintendent, I say sup...

Joan Beifuss: Have you read the book on (muffled) by the way?

Dan Powell: No, I haven't. He was not superintendent of the schools, he was the superintendent of a black school.

Joan Beifuss: Booker T. Washington.

Dan Powell: Yeah.

Joan Beifuss: But, so the black vote had not -- that had been in Crump's pocket had been small and had been kept under good control up until this point. Does it here make its first move then out?

Dan Powell: It makes its first move away from Crump. And, in that election we had real problems in the black precincts with watches. Because the Crump leaders were trying to vote blacks as they voted them before, and for the first time they didn't.

Carol Lynn Yellin: How was that? That was really instructing them, almost right in the polling place?

Dan Powell: Yeah, and going in the polling place with them. You see, in those days we had paper ballots you know.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And you had many, many illiterate voters among the blacks?

Dan Powell: Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss: Was there a poll tax?

Dan Powell: There was a poll tax, but by '48, as I recall, it was meaningless because it only applied to -- it didn't apply to women, it didn't apply to veterans.

Joan Beifuss: It didn't apply to women?

Dan Powell: No, it didn't apply to women. Women and veterans had been exempt. That's the way we got rid of the poll tax, we began to exempt various groups in the state from the poll tax, to where the poll tax actually became meaningless. Then in the amendment to the Constitution in '54 it was finally repealed.

Joan Beifuss: If women's lib had been (muffled) it never would have -- we'd still have the poll tax.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, that's interesting because I learned the other day that Tennessee was the state that both in, was the final state that caused the women's suffrage to be voted in, it was at the point when Tennessee ratified that amendment, why women got the vote, and I had forgotten it was a very close vote as I recall.

Joan Beifuss: I'm sure.

Carol Lynn Yellin: There's some very interesting story connected to it, which is beside the point here.

Joan Beifuss: There wasn't even a COPE then.

Dan Powell: You mean in the state legislature?

Carol Lynn Yellin: In the state legislature, yes.

Joan Beifuss: Okay, so then here then you have Kefauver and you also have an emergent black electorate of some sort.

Dan Powell: Yeah, well where Crump was really hurting -- now Kefauver was the colorful end of it, but the loss of the United States Senate seat did not damage Crump as much as the loss of the governorship. When Browning came in as governor, he and Crump were bitter enemies, and he greatly weakened Crump, taking the Crump people and the establishment people out of office, and putting his own people in. Now Browning served two terms.

Joan Beifuss: So what Crump lost then was state patronage all over the place then.

Dan Powell: Yeah. In 1950, in the meantime labor had broken with Browning because Browning used troops to break a textile mill strike in Morristown, and in '50...

Joan Beifuss: Would you just give us a couple of lines on that? What was that?

Dan Powell: Well, labor had supported Browning for governor in 1948, along with Kefauver. Now we were not as enthusiastic about Browning as we were with Kefauver. But...

Carol Lynn Yellin: But some labor money had gone into his campaign?

Dan Powell: Yes. And then in '49, Browning -- we had a strike in a textile mill in Morristown. He had sent in the troops to break the strike, and he broke the strike and labor became very, very bitter.

Carol Lynn Yellin: The National Guard.

Dan Powell: Yeah. And, in 19...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Excuse me, Dan, but had there been violence at that strike? I mean what was the reasoning for sending in troops? Was it just fear of violence, or had there been? Do you recall.

Dan Powell: You see violence is very easy to get in a strike. Some of it is created by the company themselves (muffled). The company wants violence so that they can go to the governor and get the troops in there, because once the troops come in, then the strike is generally broken. So, this is what happened there. But, we are getting ahead a very interesting thing that happened, it affected Kefauver's whole career, if you want me to include this in there. After the Democratic primary in '48; remember '48 was a presidential year. Truman had won the nomination, and the third party movement, Thurman and Wright had sprung up in the South.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Strom Thurman.

Dan Powell: Strom Thurman. Browning was the Democratic nominee. The singer, Roy Acuff, was the Republican nominee for governor.

Carol Lynn Yellin: The country music man?

Dan Powell: Yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: I hadn't realized that.

Dan Powell: And Carroll Reece, who had been the veteran congressman from the first congressional district, and who had resigned in 1947 to head up the Republican National Committee, he was the National Chairman. Carroll Reece was a Taft man, and when Dewey won the nomination in '48, Dewey fired Carroll Reece as Chairman of the National Committee, didn't reappoint him. So, Carroll Reece came back and ran for the United States Senate, got the Republican nomination, the Republicans then were nominated by convention, to run against Kefauver. Now, Roy Acuff, being a Grand Ole Opry star and movie star and singer, was drawing tremendous crowds over the state. He spoke and sang here in Memphis, and he and Carroll Reece were traveling as a team; and, he drew 50,000 people in Memphis in 1948. Now, this was the biggest crowd that had ever come to a political gathering, and this scared the living hell out of Browning. Now, in Tennessee you had a custom, a tradition, that in the general election the candidate for governor controlled the campaign. So, Browning was frightened by the

crowds that Roy Acuff was drawing, and he was also frightened by Crump's threat to lead the Democratic party. Now Crump was supporting Thurman and Wright for presidency. And, Browning was afraid that the Dixiecrats put up a candidate for governor, and split the Democratic vote and elect Roy Acuff. So, Browning was scared to death all during that election. In the meantime, McKellar came down here, and as usual he went to the hospital during the campaign, because he didn't want to offend Crump, he didn't want to offend Truman, and he didn't care about Kefauver -- he hated Kefauver, but he was caught between Ed Crump and Truman see, Truman was running for president. So, McKellar was in the hospital all during the campaign. Browning was very opposed to connecting Truman in any way with the Democratic campaign in Tennessee for the governorship and for the Senate. He wanted Truman kept out.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did he feel Truman was a loser?

Dan Powell: Well, he felt like Truman was going to lose. He also felt that this might result in a defection of his vote to the Republicans, that Truman was that unpopular. Here in Shelby County for example, during the general election the CIO was the only group, the only organized group in Shelby County that was for Harry Truman. We were going to put out a sign for (muffled) for the Democratic party here. Now Crump had left it now -- he was supporting Thurman and Wright. Browning did not want -- the Browning people here -- did not want Truman's name on the sample ballot. He took the position that if Truman's name isn't on the sample ballot, (muffled), but there's not going to be a sample ballot that we pay for. Now if you want to pay for your own ballot go ahead. Well, they were so hard up for money that they had to take the ballot that we were paying for with Truman's name on it. Kefauver was not this frightened. Kefauver was actually strongly for Harry Truman, but Kefauver could not set the tone of the campaign; this was in Browning's hands. So the election took place. Truman was reelected. Olin Johnston, a senator from South Carolina, who had also set out the campaign, he hadn't gone to the hospital, but he hadn't done anything for Truman, though his brother had. He and McKellar, after the election was over McKellar suddenly gets well see, and they head back to Washington. And they almost have a foot race when Truman's train gets in from Kansas City after the election. They almost had a foot race to get to Truman to tell the president how much each one of them had done for him, when neither one of them did a damn thing for him. But, McKellar -- McKellar was a good friend of Truman's. he had known him in the Senate when Truman was head of the Investigating Committee. McKellar poisoned Harry Truman's mind against Estes Kefauver. And, in 1949, Estes Kefauver I had him speak in Richmond. He had been in the Senate then four or five months. And he told me, he says, "I can't even get a postmaster appointed from Chattanooga, my hometown." And, it was because of the President's attitude towards him -- Truman, his mind being poisoned by McKellar, that Kefauver finally took the Senate Investigating Committee, investigating crime. And this further widened the gap between Truman and Kefauver because Truman blamed the 50 losses that the Democrats suffered on Kefauver's crime committee, because the crime committee naturally organized crime is more rampant in your cities than it is in your rural areas. Well the cities were controlled by Democratic mayors.

Joan Beifuss: Dan, back in Memphis when Crump threw his support in Strom Thurman, how much of Memphis went with that?

Dan Powell: I don't recall how Shelby County when it was close here, I think that Shelby County went for Truman, but I am not sure. Tennessee did. In fact that was the last time that Tennessee went Democratic.

Carol Lynn Yellin: In '48.

Dan Powell: In '48 until 1964. But, this election, Browning's fright, his failure to support Truman down here, and then McKellar's convincing Truman that Kefauver was the cause of it, that Kefauver hadn't supported him, and the beginning of the alienation between Truman and Kefauver may have kept Estes Kefauver from being on the ticket in 1952.

Joan Beifuss: So then, when you come then back into Memphis in the mid '50s. By the way, are you still -- by the mid '50s are you still representing the entire South, or are you cut down to a smaller region in the South?

Dan Powell: I am representing most of the South for the CIO up until '52. After '52 I don't have Texas. I had -- back in '48 (muffled) support of Lyndon Johnson in Texas, and this alienated some powerful people in Texas, so they tried to get me out of Texas, and were successful. But, Texas was about the only state that I didn't have.

Joan Beifuss: What was your title?

Dan Powell: Southern Director.

Joan Beifuss: Director. Okay well then, pulling into Memphis then in the mid '50s, what year did Crump die, I have forgotten.

Dan Powell: Crump died, I think it was '53 or '55.

Joan Beifuss: And then what happened to the machine here? What was...?

Dan Powell: Well, after Crump's death it fell apart.

Joan Beifuss: Well how did it split? Did it split county and city? Or how did it...or did it just all go to pieces, or what did it do?

Dan Powell: Well, immediately after Crump's death -- see about the time shortly after Crump's death the race issue began to become -- '54 decision in the Supreme Court. I am trying to think what year was it that Crump died.

Joan Beifuss: I was thinking '54, but I may be...

Dan Powell: He was alive when Clement was elected, because he had supported Clement in '52. I think he died in '55, or maybe in the first part of '55, or maybe '54. After his death, Crump still controlled the city. His influence did not extend much beyond Shelby County. He would still be able to elect his delegation to the legislature. Then Toby was mayor I believe at the time Crump died, or was mayor shortly after. The first defeat came with Ed Orgill's election down here as mayor. Now this was, what '55?

Joan Beifuss: I don't know. Loeb came...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Loeb followed...

Joan Beifuss: (muffled)

Dan Powell: Orgill was elected in '55.

Joan Beifuss: '55, and probably took office in January.

Dan Powell: I think it was a 4-year term then, wasn't it, yeah.

Joan Beifuss: Yeah.

Dan Powell: So, he was elected in '55, and then Crump was dead before Loeb was elected, I mean before Orgill.

Joan Beifuss: Who ran against Orgill, do you know?

Dan Powell: Overton ran against Orgill, and there was another candidate in the race.

Joan Beifuss: Was it Watkins Overton?

Dan Powell: Uh huh.

Joan Beifuss: Well, now does Watkins Overton then have what is left of the Crump machine support, is that?

Dan Powell: Yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did Cliff Davis figure in this? The former congressman? Hadn't he once been a standing candidate for Congress, or Crump took a congressional seat?

Dan Powell: Well, Davis had been a police judge here, and when Walter Chandler was brought back from Washington from Congress to become mayor, then Davis was sent to Congress as a congressman from this district. But Davis had no, very little political influence in his own rite. All of Davis's power flowed from Crump. But, after Crump's death, the Crump organization, which by then was deteriorating, completely

deteriorated. They had the organization here for a while that was composed almost entirely of Crump's followers called Citizens for Progress, I believe it was. It had a motto, "Keep Memphis Down in Dixie."

Carol Lynn Yellin: Wasn't that Loeb's campaign slo -- was Loeb a part of that group?

Dan Powell: No, this was primarily a Dave Harsh/Overton group, the old Crump group. Now Loeb had been appointed to the commission, the city commission, City Beautiful I believe it was, the planning commission, with the Crump support.

Joan Beifuss: Loeb came out of the American Legion group (muffled).

Dan Powell: Yeah, yeah. And then he had been elected as Commissioner of Streets in 1955.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was this when he was also commissioner of public -- well he called himself the "garbage man."

Joan Beifuss: (muffled)

Dan Powell: Yeah. And then in '59, he announced he was going to run for mayor, and Ed Orgill because of health, or at least that were the reasons that were given, got out of the race. It probably was really (muffled) reason.

Joan Beifuss: Why would there be any question about that?

Dan Powell: Well, the question was if Loeb was opposing him whether he thought he could beat Loeb or not.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Now what would you say, Dan, was the source of Loeb's popularity at that early point in his career? Henry Loeb, he was, he had served only as a commissioner. Of course I guess in those days you were one of five city commissioner's and you got a fair amount of attention.

Dan Powell: Well, Loeb was good-looking, he was young, tall, attractive. He got a lot of publicity when he was on the City Planning Commission, or the City Park Commission, I have forgotten which one it was. And, he was first elected, as I say, in '55 when Ed Orgill was elected as mayor. I think it was the fact that a new face in a sense.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was he a team player at that point, or was he something of a maverick in Ed Orgill's administration?

Dan Powell: As I recall, he did not support Orgill very much. He and Bill Farris -- no Bill Farris was on the commission later. Bill Farris took Loeb's job in '59. I don't think that he actually developed a racial attitude or racial reputation, as I recall, until

about -- it may have been in '55. That part of my mind is foggy. Because I didn't pay too much attention to that city election.

Joan Beifuss: Yeah, I was going to say in '55 I think he got a considerable amount of black support, if I remember correctly. He went in saying I too am a member of a minority just as you are. And I believe he had a great deal of black support in '55.

Dan Powell: I didn't know that Loeb had ever publicly admitted he was a Jew.

Joan Beifuss: Maybe (muffled) story.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Maybe on Beale Street only.

Joan Beifuss: He'd stand behind (muffled).

Dan Powell: I have forgotten who he ran against in -- was it Dillard that he ran against?

Carol Lynn Yellin: I am not sure.

Joan Beifuss: I am not sure either. So then by '59 then you've got the Sugarman/Willis thing coming on, don't you?

Dan Powell: Huh?

Joan Beifuss: By '59 then you had the Sugarman/Willis thing coming on, don't you?

Dan Powell: Yeah. Well, and the way that came about, the AFL-CIO was very much responsible for that.

Joan Beifuss: Is the AFL still, are you still organizing, trying to organize Memphis all through the '50s and what not? Is the organization proceeding?

Dan Powell: Oh yeah, we were still organizing, and we were spending more and more time with the black community here. The CIO and the labor movement. The CIO first, and then the AF of L deserve a great of credit for the development of the black vote here -- what they did behind the scenes. For example, in ...

Carol Lynn Yellin: An independent -- black vote that was independent of the Crump machine.

Dan Powell: Right, it was in opposition to the Crump machine. In '58 in the governor's race, Tip Taylor had made a surprisingly good showing. Nobody had expected Tip Taylor to run a neck-and-neck race with Ellington. And you remember, he nosed out Orgill. Orgill ran third. He was about 700 votes behind Tip Taylor. So after Taylor had lost in the governor's race in '58, it was apparent to some of us that he was the natural candidate, that the opposition would put up to keep Orgill in '60. Because

Tip Taylor was a conservative. He was from West Tennessee.

Joan Beifuss: I don't even know who Tip Taylor is.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Is he related to Bob Taylor, or it's a different Taylor?

Dan Powell: No, Tip Taylor is from Jackson, Tennessee. He is now a judge over there. He was a judge at the time he ran for governor. Taylor had made a surprisingly strong race for governor. Kefauver was in trouble in '60 because he had run for the vice presidency, and hadn't even carried Tennessee in '56 with Stevenson, so it looked like he was going to have the fight of his life in '60. We knew that the vote that would save Kefauver, if it were a close race, would be the black vote because for now Kefauver had emerged as a champion of the blacks. In the '54 campaign he did that when Pat Sutton raced (muffled), and in '54 he pulled about 99%, 98-99% of the black vote.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was this the first time that that had happened?

Dan Powell: What?

Carol Lynn Yellin: That thing of just totally, a black block vote that really made a difference in the Kefauver thing? Where you would see those big...

Dan Powell: Uh, '54 was I would say marked the beginning of the real black block vote, yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And you would see those big precincts, big votes coming in with 900 for Kefauver and 10 for the opposition.

Dan Powell: I would say at least in state elections this marked the beginning, '54. Now, the black vote in '52 had supported Browning heavily here, but again this was partly because of Kefauver. See Kefauver had been closely associated with Browning in '52, in the primary, I mean in the convention, Democratic convention. And then Browning had gotten Kefauver to go on statewide radio for him in '52. But in '54 the black vote went heavily for Kefauver, and it went heavily for Frank Clement. You see Clement's opponent, who again was Browning in '54. Browning now was race bait. And in '52 Browning had gotten the black vote.

Joan Beifuss: Well is Kefauver then, when Kefauver -- was Kefauver the first one that doesn't race bait.?

Dan Powell: Well, this is about the time you know, '54 is a Supreme Court decision.

Joan Beifuss: '54 is when the Brown decision went out. I mean no one had had to do it before. I assume it was just, no one paid any attention to that vote before.

Dan Powell: They had -- no, in 1948 the race issue had been raised against Kefauver

under the FEPC thing. In fact, every campaign that Kefauver made the race issue was a major issue in the campaign, and each time he'd beat him. Now he beat Taylor so bad with the race issue, Taylor raising the race issue against him in '60 -- he beat Taylor so bad that had Kefauver lived to '66, I don't think that he'd had any opposition, or if he'd had had opposition they certainly wouldn't have tried to raise the race issue this time.

Carol Lynn Yellin: I am going to backtrack one more time here, because the Clinton, Tennessee thing of the bombing of the school there. This came after this election where Kefauver and Clement had both received black vote, in '54.

Dan Powell: This came, as I recall about '55.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And, the reason I'm bringing it up was that it was interesting that of all of the southern school troubles where National Guard was called out, that that was the one where the governor send the Guard in to protect the schoolchildren who were integrating a school under Supreme Court order, isn't that right?

Dan Powell: Well, there had been violence there before he sent the Guard in, and actually Frank was reluctant to send in the Guard. He send the Guard in to keep peace.

Joan Beifuss: Is that the John Casper -- is that where John Casper (muffled)?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, but he didn't use the Guard the way Orval Faubus did in Arkansas, which was -- well it was after...was that after Little Rock?

Dan Powell: This was '56 as I recall, Clinton was either after or just before. No it was '56 at Clinton.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, and I guess the point of my question is, when you look back over those historic things that made the newspapers then, Governor Faubus was using the Guard in Little Rock in one way, George Wallace later standing in the schoolhouse door, and the point I'm making was that, was the black vote -- did Frank Clement feel obligation because of a black vote that would cause him to act differently from Faubus and Wallace, in a somewhat similar situation? Is it possible this would be true?

Dan Powell: No, I think it was a different set of circumstances completely. In the first place, no question what Frank Clement had received the black support, but Frank Clement was a young man then with national ambition, and Frank had enough sense to see that the day of the segregationist politician was numbered. Now in Arkansas about the same time, Orval Faubus was dead politically. In 1956, Faubus had been elected by an impossible coalition. Every political force in the state of any significance was supporting Faubus. You had labor, you had the Delta planters, you had Whit Stevens with the Arkansas/Louisiana Power and Gas Company. You had every economic vested interest group in the state supporting Faubus. It is obvious he's got to double-cross somebody, and he double-crossed more than he had to. So, by the fall of 1957, Faubus

was dead politically in Arkansas. He couldn't have been elected dog catcher had there been an election held prior to the Little Rock High School. Ed Rivers and Roy Harris from Georgia. Not Ed Rivers, Griffin...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Marvin Griffin, yes.

Dan Powell: Marvin Griffin and Roy Harris came over to see Faubus. They wanted this tactic used, but they didn't want to use it in Georgia. Now Faubus is a logical person to propose this to because he is dead otherwise. If this backfires, he's got nothing to lose because he couldn't win anyway, but if it doesn't backfire, if it works, he has a rebirth in politics, and it worked and he had a rebirth. Now Wallace operated pretty much the way Faubus. It was opportunism with Wallace. George and I used to be very close friends. I first met George at the Democratic convention in '48. And George had been a liberal in Alabama. He had been a Folsom supporter, and a Lester Hill supporter, and it came as a shock to me when George began to make the statements that he made after authoring Lucy case in Alabama. And a few months later, he and I spoke at the University of Alabama, and I got in the night before we were to speak, and by coincidence we had rooms side-by-side in a townhouse there. And, George and I sat up most of the night talking, and he told me he was going to run for governor in '58 in Alabama, and he was going to use the race issue as his chief plain. And, I tried to persuade him that he couldn't win on the race issue, so I had a higher opinion of the intelligence of the Alabama voter than George had, but George was right.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did this make you doubt your political acumen, Dan? When you saw that?

Dan Powell: Yeah, I think it probably did. In fact, that whole, the reaction of the South to the race issue.

Carol Lynn Yellin: You had felt they were farther along?

Dan Powell: Yeah, I had. You see, I was -- most of my experience in politics span a very difficult period in southern politics from 1950 through today. It's getting much better today, but in '50 I was in the Pepper campaign in Florida when Claude was defeated by George Smathers I moved from Florida up to North Carolina in Frank Graham's campaign for the Senate, and again we were defeated with the race issue. The same tactics that had been used in Florida were transferred to North Carolina and used to defeat Dr. Graham. And, during the '50s, the race issue not only made itself felt in diving the voters in the South, but it divided the trade union vote.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well that's interesting. You know what that brings me back to? And it is something that I've had a little (muffled) to ask you that you mentioned earlier. And, right back to the Firestone workers and the fact that there was this division, really segregation in that union as far as seniority things and all of this goes. When did that disappear, and what I'm getting you to, Dan, is I think we should get on to 1968 if we can, a little bit about...

Dan Powell: Now when did what disappear?

Carol Lynn Yellin: The segregation -- or at what point did the Firestone Rubber Workers have an integrated union? Had it happened by 1968?

Dan Powell: They had had an integrated union...there had been an integrated union as far as meetings were concerned, and as far as activities in the union were concerned pretty much since the beginning. There had never been two separate locals in Firestone.

Joan Beifuss: But had there been in other?

Dan Powell: Not in the CIO. Now there were in the AF of L, but not in the CIO.

Joan Beifuss: (muffled) I am talking about Memphis specifically.

Dan Powell: Had there been what?

Joan Beifuss: Two separate unions within the...

Dan Powell: Not in any CIO unions that I know of. We had trouble in the Automobile Workers, too, over the race issue. We had trouble in the Electrical Workers, IUE, International Union of Electrical workers over the race issue. But, there was discrimination in terms of promotion in Firestone. The lines for promotion. I think that this had -- well I know this had disappeared by '68. I think that most of this had disappeared by '64 with the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, what is of course of interest is the use of the Firestone Hall, by when we get to this sanitation strike, and the fact that these men, and a predominantly black union obviously had this kind of support from the Firestone workers.

Dan Powell: Well, remember this that Firestone is increasingly, the number of blacks in the Rubber Workers local was increasing, and it is a substantial minority out there now.

Joan Beifuss: Dan, what would be the biggest union here, or what would be the biggest CIO union in '68? The biggest grouping of unionized people?

Dan Powell: '68 it would probably be RCA, had the plant had come in here by then hadn't it?

Joan Beifuss: Yeah, right, uh huh.

Dan Powell: RCA was probably...

Joan Beifuss: What were the other big unionized plants then?

Dan Powell: Firestone would be one of them.

Carol Lynn Yellin: General Motors.

Dan Powell: No, we don't have...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Oh, I mean that's UAW.

Dan Powell: Well, we don't have a General Motors anyway -- no we have International Harvester. Yeah, that would be one of the larger ones.

Joan Beifuss: But, well I'm still trying to -- when people say that Memphis is a weak union town, the comparison I assume then is being made with northern centers rather than other centers in the South. Are we still -- is union organized labor here still again comparable to New Orleans, and Atlanta, and Savannah, or wherever?

Dan Powell: I would not say that we are comparable in terms of percentage of workforce.

Joan Beifuss: Are we higher or lower?

Dan Powell: We are lower probably than Birmingham. In percentage of workforce, I would say we compare very favorably with Atlanta. I don't know whether it's more or less, but it would not be a great deal either way.

Joan Beifuss: Okay, now how about in black union membership? Do you have any idea what percentage, say, of your union members?

Dan Powell: Here in Shelby?

Joan Beifuss: Yeah.

Dan Powell: I would say approximately a third is black.

Joan Beifuss: A third. Can you give me any...

Dan Powell: Or maybe a little more than that.

Joan Beifuss: Can you give any kind of indication of when it went that high? Was there any kind of a tilt year where all of a sudden you started picking up more and more black union members, or?

Dan Powell: Well, you see, when during the organizing drive in the South for the CIO, which lasted from 1946 to the merger -- it was being closed out at the time of the merger, one of the industries...

Carol Lynn Yellin: The merger with the AFL?

Dan Powell: One of the industries that we had the most success in organizing was wood. Wood is highly black.

Joan Beifuss: Would that be the actual men that go out and chop down the wood, or are you talking about plant?

Dan Powell: No, Wood Workers, which would include...

Joan Beifuss: Finishing.

Dan Powell: Wood plants, saw mills in Mississippi. It would include wood finishing plants.

Joan Beifuss: Were black organizers being sent into these places where there were a lot of black workers?

Dan Powell: Yeah, in many, many cases the organizing drive had a number of black organizers. And blacks were easier to organize in the South than whites were. I remember in the case of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the Reynolds plant there -- this was during the war. FTA, Food and Tobacco Workers organized this plant. And this was a left wing union. And they sent the organizers in to organize. Since the blacks were easy to sign up they concentrated on the blacks, and they got the blacks almost 95-98%. But the plant itself was about 50/50. Now when you get this high a proportion of blacks, the whites don't join. So, they just had a handful during their existence in the Reynolds Tobacco Company, they just had a handful of whites, but a predominant number of blacks, and they were always around the 50% mark. So when the company forced them to strike in '48, they didn't have -- the union was not strong enough in the plant to survive this strike. But, the thing is in terms of black workers, when they began to come into the union is not marked so much by a date, as by the migration from the farms as the South mechanizes its farming, and this is particularly true in this area. As mechanical cotton pickers came in in Mississippi in the Mississippi delta, blacks moved into Memphis. This was the first stop on the way to Chicago and New York. Many of them never got beyond this. They got jobs and went out into industrial plants. As the mechanization of the farming increased, the number of black workers in this area increased. As they increased, the unions increased.

Joan Beifuss: Does the union ever have a problem of white workers saying we'll only come into it, or did it say around 1960, we'll only come into the union if you don't take in black workers. Does the union ever face this?

Dan Powell: Where the white worker said they wouldn't come in if you didn't take in the black workers.

Joan Beifuss: If you did take in the black workers.

Dan Powell: Yeah, I think that we've had that.

Carol Lynn Yellin: You said this was one of the problems during that, when you were listing the problems during the '50s, that the race issue was splitting everything, including the unions.

Dan Powell: Yeah, the race issue was used most effectively as a school issue.

Joan Beifuss: It was used politically more than it was in organizing.

Dan Powell: Yeah and politically than it was -- now it crept into organizing, but we were split not only in the non-organized plants, we were split in the organized plants. In other words, in Alabama for example, our white members went overwhelmingly for Wallace, and our black members went overwhelmingly against him.

Joan Beifuss: Let me ask you a hypothetical question about Memphis. If in early 1968, if that black union had not been sanitation workers, say, this is very hypothetical, but say you had 1300 electricians that wanted to organize somehow would you have had the same -- was the reaction here against the blacks organizing, or was it against union organizing? Can you make that kind of distinction? Or was it because they were city employees, or is all one?

Carol Lynn Yellin: You mean the city-wide reaction, Joan?

Dan Powell: And let me answer that, Joan, in this way. Right after the strike started here, some of the labor leaders, some of the council leaders became very concerned; and, their theory was at that time that we need to make this a straight-out union issue, not make it a black and white issue. In discussing this with them and with the leaders of the sanitation workers, I took the opposite position. I don't think if this had been made a union issue that the sanitation workers would have wanted to strike. Because, they would not have solidified the black community behind them if this had been just a union issue.

Joan Beifuss: Point of fact, wasn't it actually, though, kind of taken out of the union's hands?

Dan Powell: Huh?

Joan Beifuss: Wasn't it kind of taken out of the union's hands whether or not it would be a civil rights issue or a union issue?

Dan Powell: No, the union agreed to this. Jerry Wurf was smart enough to realize what I was saying that if you make this a straight labor issue you'll lose it. If you make it a racial issue, you've got a good chance of winning.

Joan Beifuss: Why?

Dan Powell: Because, if you make it a straight labor issue you don't solidify the black community. If you make it a straight labor issue, you don't even solidify the labor movement because these workers are all black.

Carol Lynn Yellin: So, in other words, had they...

Joan Beifuss: But if you make it a civil rights issue you solidify the white community.

Dan Powell: Huh?

Joan Beifuss: If you make it a civil rights issue though, if you amalgamate labor and civil rights...

Dan Powell: You've still got a better chance that way.

Joan Beifuss: Even though your reaction from your total white community is greater than it would be otherwise.

Dan Powell: You've got a better chance in making it a racial issue and getting the solidity of the black community, solidifying the black community.

Joan Beifuss: Was that Jerry Wurf's feeling, too?

Dan Powell: Yeah.

Joan Beifuss: And Champa?

Dan Powell: Yeah. Champa.

Joan Beifuss: Did you meet with Champa? When he first came in were you with him much?

Dan Powell: No, I've known Champa for years.

Joan Beifuss: Oh have you? Where does he come from?

Dan Powell: Champa comes out of UAW. Champa defeated Tom Starling for Regional Director of UAW, which included this region.

Joan Beifuss: Where is he from?

Dan Powell: He is originally from Maryland, out of the Baltimore local. And, Champa ran against (muffled). Tom Starling was a (muffled) man, and (muffled) wanted to keep starling on the board, but Champa ran against him, and defeated him. And, Champa was

frozen out and defeated in the next election, and then after he was defeated he left the union, left UAW, and ended up with the state/county municipal workers. This was the first time I'd seen him since he had been Regional Director for the UAW in Atlanta

Carol Lynn Yellin: Had you known Jerry Wurf before, too?

Dan Powell: I had met Jerry. I got to know Jerry better during the strike than before.

Joan Beifuss: Well, when Champa first came in right at the very beginning then, did he realize at all what the racial potential was here? Or did he...?

Dan Powell: I think he did. You see, Bill Lucy was in here with him.

Joan Beifuss: Yeah, and Jesse Epps.

Dan Powell: And Bill Lucy is a very capable and a very bright young man. Lucy is one of the hopes that this union has, and I think one of the hopes of the labor movement. We need more men like Bill Lucy.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And did he see it this way, too? Did he see the potential of involving the whole black community?

Dan Powell: Sure. You see, they tried to organize when Ingram was in there. Ingram had got a court injunction stopping them. Now, had Ingram reelected as mayor of this city in 1967, my guess is that organization of the sanitation workers would have been delayed. We might have gotten it during Ingram's term, but it would have been delayed. The moment that Loeb was elected this made, in my opinion, the union (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: Why?

Dan Powell: Because the sanitation workers were black, only a handful of whites. This then, when Loeb comes in now as mayor...

Joan Beifuss: Dan, there doesn't seem to have been in those years when Sisson was commissioner and Ingram was mayor, when there were attempts to organize was there much support for them out of organized labor here?

Dan Powell: Yeah, there was a good deal of support for them out of organized labor.

Joan Beifuss: The retail clerks I think were supportive, too. Who else was?

Dan Powell: The council supported them. Other unions here supported them. But...

Joan Beifuss: Rank and file or leadership?

Dan Powell: I think the leadership, and to some degree the rank and file. But, there

was not the strength mobilized behind that organizing effort, as was mobilized in '68.

Joan Beifuss: Right, but that's because in '66 it wasn't, it didn't become a racial.

Dan Powell: In '67, '66 and '67 you did not have a (muffled). You had Ingram who had a damn good image in the black community. So, you couldn't solidify the black community behind the organizing effort on a racial basis. This is what I'm saying, that had you made this a trade union issue completely, the right of sanitation workers to organize, had race not been involved in it, I don't think you would have won this back in '68.

Joan Beifuss: But, in the beginning, wasn't there some diversity of opinion among labor leaders about whether in fact you should admit the civil rights aspects into it?

Dan Powell: Sure. Many, most of the labor leaders in town, which were white union labor leaders did not want the issue to made that of race.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Why -- was this because they felt that it would be bad for the strike itself? I mean bad for the chances of winning the strike, or did they fear that it would weaken the labor movement as a whole to stir this up?

Dan Powell: I think in the first place they felt that it would divide labor on the strike if we made it into a racial issue, which it may have done. But, what I am saying to you, you had a choice here of having a solidified labor movement, if possible, and I am not sure we had gotten a solidified labor movement behind the strike if it had been solely on the labor issue. But, assuming that you would...

Carol Lynn Yellin: You wouldn't have gotten it more solidified than you had say in '66 or '67?

Dan Powell: (muffled)

Carol Lynn Yellin: Which wasn't enough to, to...

Dan Powell: That's right. If you have a choice behind this strike, a solidified labor movement or a solidified black community, your black community in '68 is in a position to exercise more pressure than the labor movement.

Joan Beifuss: Had you worked at all with T.L. Jones through '66 and '67?

Dan Powell: Yeah, I had worked with T.L. in '68 campaign, the election, I mean not '68, '66 election, and I had known T.L. for a long time.

Joan Beifuss: Is it, this is stuff we've picked up on other tapes, is it possible that T. L. Jones in '67 could have gone to the mayoral candidates and tried to bargain and said he would throw his people in support of whichever mayor would give them what they

wanted as a union? Is that possible?

Dan Powell: I don't think so for two reasons. In the first place, in '67, in the '67 election Ingram and Willis were going to divide the black vote. This was obvious all the way through. T.L. would have had no bargaining power with Ingram because Ingram had the black vote regardless of what T.L. did. He had the black vote over Willis see? I remember we used to have a Tuesday luncheon group, people interested in politics here, and Fred Davis was a member of that group. This was in '67, about the time that Willis was running for mayor. And, Fred was sitting next to him at one of these luncheons, and I said, "Fred, A.W. is not going to run, is he?" And he says, "Why?" I said, "Well, I just can't believe that A.W. is crazy enough, politically crazy enough to commit suicide by running for mayor with Ingram in that race." And Fred says, "How do you mean." I said, "Well, against Ingram, A.W. will not get 50% of the black vote." "Oh, you're wrong, you're wrong. A.W. would get a big majority of the black vote against Ingram." So, we bet a couple of steaks on it. First I bet him a steak that he wouldn't, and then I bet him a steak that he had made a bad bet. But, it was obvious to me that Bill Ingram, his stature was increasing in the black community, Willis's was declining.

Joan Beifuss: Why?

Dan Powell: Well, because of his relationships with the black community. To give you an example, a Negro maid was asked if she was going to vote for A.W. Willis. Her reply was that she wouldn't vote for A.W. Willis if he was the only man in the race. Why? Well, he holds the mortgage on our church. If we are a week late paying out our monthly payment on that mortgage he comes out there and talks to us like a bunch of, like we are a bunch of dogs. I think, generally, that there was a feeling in the black community that A.W. Willis had gotten too big for his britches. And, that he didn't have the interest of the community at heart, that he only had his own political interests at heart. Now the first mistake that they made was in 19...the first bad mistake that they made was in 1963 when they tried to carry Bill Farris in the black community against Ingram, and Ingram beat him 2:1 in every...

Joan Beifuss: Are you talking about the Shelby Democratic Club?

Dan Powell: Yeah, and Ingram beat him 2:1 in all the black boxes. Well, this was the beginning of the decline and fall of the Shelby County Democratic Club.

Carol Lynn Yellin: It really, it was terribly effective for only about 4 or 5 years then, wasn't it?

Dan Powell: Well, yeah, but you see, I have a great respect for the intelligence of the black voter. They will solidify as long as the candidate that their leaders are supporting has a good image in the black community. It is not hard to get a 98-99% vote for Bill Ingram, because Ingram had a good image when he was city judge here. He took on the Memphis Police Department. Well, when you take on the Memphis Police Department in this town in the late '50s, you're taking on the symbol of black oppression. And, Bill

Ingram gained his image in this way, and the average black felt that Bill Ingram was their friend. Now when Willis and Sugarman come around, saying now we are going to support Farris, they had never voted for Farris. '57, see Farris was running against Sugarman for Public Service Commissioner. Then in 1960 the black community was supporting Frank Clement when Farris was running against Clement for governor.

Carol Lynn Yellin: So, this is like coming around and saying, you voted for L.B.J., now come around and vote for Goldwater, he's really all right in '65.

Dan Powell: And you know, this was the first time as far as I can remember, in all of southern politics, when a prominent black leader lost the black precincts to a white opponent by 2:1, and Willis lost his black precincts to Bill Ingram in '67 by better than 2:1. Now of course, people who knew politics knew exactly what was behind Willis's candidacy then. Willis had no illusions that he could win, but see Bill Farris and the Morris people, Bill of course, in my opinion...

**END OF RECORDING**

Dan Powell. Biography. We don't have a biography for Dan Powell. Production. 2020. Sarah Cooper: Everything's Fine â€¦ Executive Producer. 2018. The Break with Michelle Wolf (10 episodes) â€¦ Powell Memo, Lewis Powell, Social Control.Â He drafted the Powell Memorandum, a confidential memorandum for the US Chamber of Commerce that proposed a road map to defend and advance the free enterprise system against perceived socialist, communist, and fascist cultural trends.[3] Powell compiled a conservative record on the Court and cultivated a reputation as a swing vote with a penchant for compromise. He retired from the Supreme Court after 15 years of service. CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM Attack on American Free Enterprise System. DATE: August 23, 1971 TO: Mr. Eugene B. Sydnor, Jr., Chairman, Education Committee, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Dan Powell. 4,207 likes Â 1 talking about this. Public figure.Â See more of Dan Powell on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Dan Powell on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account?