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Transcript of DARE Interview (1970): Gifford, Florida; Primary Informant FL052 (Tape 0288-S1)

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English, tape zero two eight eight, side one.

FIELDWORKER: This is a recording of Edward [beep], made in Indian River County, Florida, town of Gifford, on August thirty-first by [beep].

5 INFORMANT: Uh, the subject that has interest me most is the Indian River County school system, and how it has changed within the past two years or more. Years ago, uh, Indian River County school system was very, it, it, it was, uh, predominantly, uh, prejudice, we would say. Uh, there was no integration, uh, in the school system. Seventy per-, seventy-five percent of the people that work in the Indian River County sy-, school system are whites. I'm sorry, seventy 10 percent are whites, and thirty percent are Blacks. Just recently in nineteen sixty-seven and sixty-eight, they decided to integrate the schools. Therefore, that cut out, uh, many, uh, of the schools and many of the advantages that were, uh, that, that, that were, uh, that were in use here in Gifford. Uh, once there was a Gifford High School, and when they cut, uh, Gifford High School out, at least when they lost Gifford High, they felt that they had really lost something, 15 because they were without a football team, a basketball team, and what have you. And most of the, uh, Negroes in Indian River County felt that, uh, they were really mistreated, why did they have to change all senior high students down to Vero Beach High School? But since there has been a Vero Beach High School, it has been found that, uh, the outstanding people in sports down there and other areas are the Black people. Uh, Indian River County school system was really, uh, uh, goofy at one time, and when I say goofy, there were many Whites who didn't 20 really favor integration. I can recall I went to a meeting in nineteen seventy, and there were many Whites standing up crying, and said that they, uh, really didn't want their children to go to school, some said that they were Christians, but, uh, they felt that, uh, they, their children just weren't ready for it. And some made the excuses that their children had too far to go for school. Some said the walking distance, some thought that children would be picked on, uh, 25 these were some of the views of the Whites. Then it was asked by some negroes, say, had they ever thought of all th-the, the advantages that they had to take of the different, uh, uh, how far some of their kids had to go, uh, completely from Gifford to Vero Beach. Some from Gifford to

Wabasso, or to Fellsmere. In the changing of the school system here, they named, they renamed the schools Vero Beach Senior High stayed as Vero Beach Senior High. You have Vero Beach Junior High, what used to be Gifford High School is now Indian River Middle-7, and you have Indian River Middle-6. You have Douglas Elementary in Wabasso, Sebastian Elementary and you have, uh Pleasant Ridge in Winter Beach, which is no more longer in use. Uh, many people of, uh, have uh liked this school system and there have been many who have kicked against it. Uh, such as an incident that happened last year, uh, between two students. Uh, it was claimed that one girl cut, well, they said a, a Black girl cut a white girl's hair. But, no barbers or anything in this town could find any evidence of this. But they still suspended this young lady from school. And told her mother that she would have really get a lawyer to appeal the case before she could get, uh, before she could really return to school. As of now, uh, this young lady still hasn't returned to school, because of the unfair, the unjust that was given to her, simply because, uh, she was voted as a cheerleader and this white girl was not. And that made them, uh, suspend this girl, and, uh, they claimed that if she was caught outside of her home, this, uh, Negro girl that, uh, she would be sent to a, a girls school, which is unfair. And as I told, uh, the young lady about two weeks ago, had it been me, I wouldn't stop it at the, uh, local courts, or the appellate courts. I would take it to the supreme courts in the state. In other words, I feel that she should really take this, uh, to the highest courts. She should even call s-, uh, the secretary of education, Mr. Floyd Christian, and see what can be done about this, because there have been many students who've done worse than that. There have been, uh, many, eh, of the white students who have been caught with marijuana, they were suspended for a s-, for a period about a week or so, about three days or more, and they have returned to school. And certainly I feel that the marijuana crime is much worse than a, uh, a s-, short crime that they said they, that this young lady cut this girl hair with a razor blade and they really couldn't find this. But, people living in Indian River County really expect these things to happen. That, uh, things, uh, wouldn't run as smooth as they thought they would, uh, integration wouldn't really be as great as they thought they would. During this incident last year, many of the top officials in the county, they got up in there, made their speeches and many people, uh, of different organizations made their speeches. Like, uh, our formal director of, of OEO here at Vero Beach, Curtis [beep], uh, stood up and made the speech and told the children, after they had this walkout, (said), "OK, you walk out, so go back to school. So you need it because you don't have anything going." Many students felt that he was really trying to use embarrassment and he was, that he was really all the way for the white man. That in other words, this, this girl, this white girl ha-, that had pushed this Negro, they felt that she hadn't really done anything wrong. And, uh, [phone rings]. And, uh, after Mr. [beep] made his speech, uh, many of the students were not satisfied, because he didn't, uh, give, uh, a just cause for this speech. Uh, in other words, they felt that he should have had details of the entire situation i-if he, uh, if he were the type that was going to, uh, be a leader or to look at both sides of it, but he didn't. People say he only just noticed one side of the, uh, situation, which was wrong, as students said, on his part. And that incident, that made many people unfriendly, or many students sh-shall we say, unfriendly a, uh, with the director of EOC at that time. Uh, there have been other incidents, where, uh,

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students have been caught with dope, and mainly the, uh, white students, and they were suspended for a while, and they were brought back. Uh, many students even say that some of the Negro councils down there have even gotten prejudice, they think that they are white. I don't see no cause for them to, uh, get ideas like this, but me-, i-in other words, many, uh, students who are in the school system, they feel that, feel, feel as if they have an Uncle Tom-y school system. That a, a, uh, that, uh, the Blacks, a great deal of the Blacks are just being Uncle Toms. Uh, we notice in the county school system, they do not have one Negro principal. Uh, eevery principal in the county is white. There were Negroes who were made assistant principals, and there were Negroes who were made assistant to the assistant principal, uh, many people are wondering why did they use that discrimination? Uh, for an example, there was one Negro who was a principal, they stripped him of all ranks, turned him to a, a, uh, what do we call this, turned him to a, a scout man who sees the students who are out of school, truant officer. And he really, uh, ro-, lost his ranks from a principal to a truant officer. Uh, I knew once that I was under the impression that at Vero Beach High School that, that, uh, there was a white principal, then there was a negro assistant principal, Mr. [beep], but I found that Mr. [beep] is the principal, then they have another white fellow, Mr. [beep], who is the assistant principle, and Mr. [beep] is the assistant to the assistant, which makes him third in line. But people say, why should people worry about that, so they, they get them, uh, the same amount of money. But, if anyone would think, uh, a-and if these people would get themselves together and really think about that situation, uh, always the man with the highest rank always get more money. And the man that is, uh, next, gets, uh, more money than the man who's third in line. But, in, around here you can't, uh, tell these people, uh, things like this.

FIELDWORKER: Uhm, tell me, Ed, you work in an EOC program which is part of OEO, and I worked for OEO before, and, um, they seem to be grossly inefficient, and I've heard you complain about your organization. Why is OEO so inefficient?

INFORMANT: Uh, down here, OEO is so inefficient simply because there has been a lot of, uh, uh, wrong dealings. In other words, uh, uh, Atlanta has felt that, uh, the budget, uh, in OEO down here has somewhat been misused, uh, they don't follow, uh, most of the personnel policies that Atlanta send down. Now each OEO program has, uh, a personnel, a personnel policy to follow, but in the meantime, they have a personnel policy that they must follow that come down from Atlanta. And the Office of Economic Opportunity in Vero Beach had not been really coincide with the policy that is, uh, uh, in Atlanta. This Atlanta has found th-, found, this Atlanta has found out. And this gives Atlanta now a, while Vero Beach Office of Economic Opportunity has a ninety day, uh, revamping period. In other words, if they don't revamp in thirty days after e-, after the evaluators have checked it out, it could be possible that they would close OEO in Vero Beach.

FIELDWORKER: Oh, goodie! Excuse me.

INFORMANT: Sure.

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FIELDWORKER: Go ahead.

INFORMANT: Uh, oh I had said that it would be possible they would, you know, close OEO in

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FIELDWORKER: Right, little bit louder, please.

INFORMANT: Uh...

FIELDWORKER: Just talk about anything, um—

INFORMANT: Well, the-

115 FIELDWORKER: So do you think they should close OEO?

INFORMANT: Uh, personally I, I don't feel that they should, because it would, uh, certainly hurt a lot of poor people in this area. I'm, uh, within favor of them keeping OEO open, you know, because, uh, uh, because, uh, things haven't happened to me personally, uh, uh, so, well, I mean, things haven't gone that, quite so well for me, I don't want them to close it down, uh, because there are parents who really need this program. And I do sympathize with people, in fact I have a very soft spot in my heart, but, I do feel that, uh, they should, uh, change the a-administration because we just have an administration, they just don't know what they are doing. And, uh, a-as long as you have an administration who really don't know what they're doing and who can't put it on the line, uh, they, they, they're really gonna have a lot of, uh, junk going, you know, because if these people don't know what they're doing, they just don't know. And, uh, really I mean you only have a few qualified people in this, in this program, you know, you, uh, that, that really know what they are doing. Uh, {they're—

FIELDWORKER: All} the OEO offices I've ever seen, people brought their personal life, they couldn't have a personal life at home and an office life there at work, you know they had to mix the two, something pathetic. I've never seen one that wasn't that way.

INFORMANT: Right, uh, this is where I feel that if these people who are supposedly administrators are professional, uh, people, anything that happened outside of the office, it shouldn't be taken out on people in the office. I mean I've always felt like this. Uh, if I go home and, uh, and something happens and it doesn't go right in my house, I should have no reason to come back and take it out on anyone else. But you see, uh, this goes to show just how professional the administrative staff is.

FIELDWORKER: Why don't you tell about that incident with the letter?

INFORMANT: W-w-with this letter?

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

140 INFORMANT: Oh well, I-I-I-I believe that this is in the letter, I would have to really do a review of the letter that I had written to DC.

FIELDWORKER: That's not the letter I mean, I mean the letter that so-and-so wrote your sister that kept you from getting a job.

INFORMANT: That so-and-so wrote my sister?

145 FIELDWORKER: Yes, I think that would be very interesting, uhm, the letter that somebody was telling me about, that somebody wrote your sister about troubles with her husband, who later thought—

INFORMANT: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh yes. Now, uh, you know I don't know why I didn't include this, and maybe at the time I wasn't, uh, thinking about this, at the time when, uh, there were, uh, troubles between the director and his wife, and, uh, she wrote, uh, my sister and asked could she stay with her, she came up to (look), and my sister, uh flatly refused, because she didn't want any trouble in her home, and she has a, a family, you know, and everything is going smooth, so why bring trouble into the home? And the director, uh, personally said, well, uh, in other words, I have to suffer for what, uh, uh, had happened, because he didn't know that I had got (note of) this letter until, uh, uh, one day my brother asked me did I read the letter and he was near. I told him, "Yes, I did," you know.

FIELDWORKER: Great and powerful shame.

INFORMANT: I-i-it was a very, I mean, disturbing thing, you know. And, uh, I mean, I think if people are gonna be administrators, they got to learn to be administrators. And I really think that they should get someone, uh, in these offices, who are not biologists, engineers and things of this kind, they need people who've had training in public administration, or some type of business administration and people who are going to work. Now you got people in, in, in, uh, OEO here, they are very qualified, like our secretaries, uh, personally, if I, if I had an office, I'd have to s-, try to sneak me secretary out of OEO, or something like that, because they're very efficient. And you've got some efficient teachers in the program. Then you got some people who just don't wanna work, all they wanna do is sit down and uh, let up, a-a-, uh, sit down, and, uh, let their volunteers do the work and they just earn their money.

FIELDWORKER: Yes, my boss always used to take three-hour lunch breaks.

INFORMANT: Gee whiz, ad-, that's, that's long enough to have lunch and everything else.

170 FIELDWORKER: I think he did.

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INFORMANT: [laugh] For three hours, gee whiz, I could assume that he did also.

FIELDWORKER: I'm just kidding, I, we used to go to lunch together. I was taking three-hour lunch breaks, you know, the whole office. My goodness. {It was very (xx).

INFORMANT: Oh,} oh, I see. Well, I believe in, uh, one good hour lunch break, and I, I-I'm like this, I do take that entire hour.

FIELDWORKER: (Oh my God) I can't, I can't eat in less than an hour and a half.

INFORMANT: Oh, really? Well, really, uh, [laugh], uh probably, I eat so fast it doesn't even take me a half an hour to eat.

FIELDWORKER: Well I just have to get away from things.

180 INFORMANT: Well, I, I could understand that, uh, situation.

FIELDWORKER: I understand you have a reputation as a real drinker in town.

INFORMANT: Uh, who has a reputation?

FIELDWORKER: You do.

INFORMANT: No, I don't know where you get that information from.

185 FIELDWORKER: Everybody I met.

INFORMANT: Uh, no, I uh, I, I, I don't have a reputation as a drinker. I am a, a sociable drinker, what you would say.

FIELDWORKER: I don't mean a drunk.

INFORMANT: What do you mean, as a—?

190 FIELDWORKER: As a sociable drinker.

INFORMANT: No, no, no, I don't really drink that much. I think people have uh, uh, somewhat been misled because I, I love music and they have bands, you know at the local bars that I go to.

FIELDWORKER: Mm, is that what it is?

INFORMANT: Uh, yes, and most people think that anytime that you're in a bar that you have to be, you know, drinking or having a taste or sipping or something like that. But it's the idea that I have a great love for music.

FIELDWORKER: What kind of music do you like?

INFORMANT: Well I like Jazz, or also I like, uh, really, I really love Jazz. I like some Rock, and uh, uh, I like, uh, this, uh, uh, psychedelic music, in fact I love music, period.

200 FIELDWORKER: What are some of your favorite groups?

INFORMANT: Uh, my favorite group is the Temptations. They, they are a very, they are very impressive group to me. And uh, well, before Diana Ross had uh, broken up with the Supremes they were my favorite and they still are because I think this other young lady is doing a marvelous job.

205 FIELDWORKER: They haven't put out any records yet.

INFORMANT: Yes they have.

FIELDWORKER: When?

INFORMANT: Uh, they have one now, "Up on [sic] the Ladder on [sic for "to"] the Roof" uh,

with, uh Jean Terrell leading.

210 FIELDWORKER: Well I think that's pretty hard on Mary Wilson. I mean, she's been with them all

these years.

INFORMANT: Right.

FIELDWORKER: Why doesn't she ever get to lead?

INFORMANT: Well, this is something I really wouldn't know. But now I'll tell you who some of

215 my favorite individual musicians are.

FIELDWORKER: Who?

INFORMANT: I love Ray Charles.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: I love Stevie Wonder's movement, not because they have the same handicap of blindness, but they just have a lot of soul. I, uh, really have a lot of uh, I-I'm crazy about this uh, new fella out, Eddie Floyd, he's pretty good. My favorite before he was killed was Sam Cooke.

Also Otis Redding was a favorite (of mine.

FIELDWORKER: I liked} Otis {Redding.

INFORMANT: Otis}, Otis Redding, uh, really got down to it. In fact I had an opportunity of

225 meeting him in Miami.

FIELDWORKER: You did? What's he like?

INFORMANT: Oh, he's a very wonderful guy.

FIELDWORKER: Well he was.

INFORMANT: Yes, he was, I mean he was wonderful fellow.

230 FIELDWORKER: What did he do there in Miami? Was he there on an engagement?

INFORMANT: Yes, he was.

FIELDWORKER: How'd you meet him?

INFORMANT: Well, I was over on the beach in that, this particular, uh, hotel, uh. The disc jockey that was, uh emceeing for Otis Redding was blind. And now he said, "You know Otis

235 Redding is here?" and I said, "Really?" Uh, they were having one of these weird parties, they were having a party, invited me and it was really something.

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: I mean they were, you know, drinking and laughing and talking and, uh, what you would call, well, as most people say, a party, but this was a set, because different ones were coupling off, you know. And he was a wonderful guy to, you know, meet.

FIELDWORKER: Lot of—mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Mm-hmm.

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FIELDWORKER: Don't fade off. Um, go ahead.

INFORMANT: Uh, I uh, as I say I love music, and you said that I was, [laugh] heard that I was a

245 great drinker, what else have you heard.

FIELDWORKER: All sorts of horrible things.

INFORMANT: Like, like, like tell me one thing you've heard.

FIELDWORKER: I couldn't say it on tape!

INFORMANT: Uh, would you tell me in my ear?

250 FIELDWORKER: [laugh]

INFORMANT: And I would, uh, I would, I don't know whether I would agree or disagree. Things like what, tell me one thing.

FIELDWORKER: Well, I anyhow, what did you major in in college?

INFORMANT: Political science.

255 FIELDWORKER: Goodness, whose views do you like in political science?

INFORMANT: Uh, in political science?

FIELDWORKER: Mm-hmm.

INFORMANT: Uh, before Kennedy died, I, uh, really liked his views. Uhm, Humphrey has some very good views. Uh, former Vice President Humphrey? And, uh, also I think that uh, Johnson had some pretty good views. In other words, now Johnson was my natural man, I consider Johnson as a wheeler and a dealer. Johnson knew politics and he knew what he was doing.

FIELDWORKER: Do you admire wheeler-dealers?

INFORMANT: Uh, when I say a wheeler and a dealer, I mean, uh, if he set to get a program done, he really went to work and didn't, you know, filibuster around with it. This is what I

mean. And I could admire a man who knows that he has something to do, and go ahead on and get the job done, and not, uh, goof around, or play around with the job. But now as they say, when you say a "wheeler-dealer," many people take that as a crooked person. No, I don't admire people who pull, pull, you know weird dear-, deals to get some of the things that they want and goof over other people because I never believed in that.

270 FIELDWORKER: That's very admirable.

INFORMANT: Really?

FIELDWORKER: I guess, one might say.

INFORMANT: Uh, well, I-I-I figure it like this, I mean, I, I wouldn't, uh, I wouldn't (pull) any crooked deals, I don't feel that I would.

275 FIELDWORKER: Well, neither would I.

INFORMANT: I will just, you know, I-I'm this type of person, I let a person know what I want or what I would like and, well, if the person don't go along with it, I don't hold nothing against them. Because, uh, ehh, I think it's up to the individuals.

FIELDWORKER: So do I.

280 INFORMANT: And uh, I was always told, from a little boy, anything you want in life, ask. You can't say it's gonna be given, but you can ask them. You can only get one of two answers, yes and no. You might get a pot or a pan thrown at you, according what's (xx), whatever you were talking about. But the only way you'll ever know something is to ask. Cause if you sit back and people are discussing something, and if you're supposed to be a part of that class, and you never ask any questions, then try and come up for a test and you don't, uh, do well on an exam, well you knew you had a question and you didn't ask then you were somewhat lost by the wayside. That's why I always felt that anything you want, anything you want to know, you ask about it, or you ask for it.

FIELDWORKER: My teacher always said, "Don't show your ignorance."

290 INFORMANT: Uh, I had a teacher say that too in history. I, in fact, I had one teacher in history, he was such a funny guy, he said, uh, now, uh, he would tell some students, said now, "You are really (xx)," said, "Don't open your mouth, because I don't want you spreading that ignorance."

FIELDWORKER: [laugh]

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INFORMANT: And uh, I can recall one time that, uh, the teacher ask a question, and he said, "Now a fool could ask this question," and I held up my hand and I answered, he said, "Didn't I tell you a fool could answer [beep]." But he was really a good history instructor.

FIELDWORKER: Did you take that from that teacher?

INFORMANT: Take what?

FIELDWORKER: Calling you a fool.

300 INFORMANT: Well, in his class there was nothing I could do about it. In fact, he called the

whole class that at times.

FIELDWORKER: Gosh darn.

INFORMANT: I told him I'd talk with him later. But the way he would say it, it was all like in a jokingly manner, you know, but I remember one day a young lady cried and he said that he only, you know, jokes. So but he, uh, found that, uh, how she felt then he would, uh, he, he wouldn't do it anymore. Because he would say some of, uh, oh the strangest things I'd ever heard him say about ignorance.

FIELDWORKER: Oh (xx) tell me some, tell me some.

INFORMANT: Mm-hmm.

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310 FIELDWORKER: Go ahead, tell me.

INFORMANT: Oh, tell you?

FIELDWORKER: Yes.

INFORMANT: Oh, I remember one time, uh, uh, there was a fellow who, who was doing so poor on, on this, on this teacher's exam, and he tried to help him, and he told him, said, "Gee whiz," said, "man, you're—," let's see how this teacher said, he'd say, "You're pregnant with ignorance and your brain need an abortion!" But, I can say overall, in my college years and sociology, in my college years I had some pretty nice times. Uh, had some pretty nice instructors, I had some rough instructors, uh, but I was able to fight the cause. The only thing, only problem I had was when I got to Tallahassee, I had to get used to that weather. You see because it's not like Vero Beach. When it's hot in Vero Beach, you at least can get a, you know, a breathe [sic] off of the ocean, then Tallahassee's just hot, sticky and dry. And when it rain, it does rain. And uh, I had to get used to going up and down the hills, and, uh, you know, being careful so I wouldn't fall and break anything. When I got to know the campus, I didn't even use my stick anymore, I used to tell them all, "A cane is for a blind man!"

FIELDWORKER: Good heavens, you must have a lot of, uhm, very good keen or receptive responses, I mean, I can hardly walk, uhm, somewhere, and I can see fairly well.

INFORMANT: Well I, I think once I've learned the place, then I just really, uh, you see, a blind person think about those things, you know, over and over again. And once they've gotten adjusted to it, there's nothing to it.

330 FIELDWORKER: Well, you must have good a sense of direction.

INFORMANT: Well, I guess you could call it that.

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FIELDWORKER: Well gee wouldn't it be terrible if I were blind with my nil sense of direction? [laugh]

INFORMANT: Uh, well, if you were blind, you could get adjusted to it. According to, uh, the person that you would deal with to, uh, uh, uh, lead you around, you know. The person w-with whom you are dealing. And uh, what they used to kid me about up, up at Florida A&M, uh, there was one, uh, lady who worked in the student union, I think she was a counselor, she said uh, "One thing [beep]," say, "if you don't know where anything else is," say, "you know where every young lady dormitory is, so you know the girls' dorms." I said, "Ah, come on, get off of it!" [laugh]

FIELDWORKER: You see what I mean? {(You see what I mean?)

INFORMANT: What, what d-, what d-, what do you—}

FIELDWORKER: And you wonder why people talk about you?

INFORMANT: What do you mean, I mean?

345 FIELDWORKER: I don't know, what did she mean?

INFORMANT: What did she mean? I just knew my way around. Th-tha-, that's what she meant. Th-that, that's all, that's all she meant. Simple to the point, I just knew my way around. And see, uh, on my senior year I was glad that I did know where all the girls dormed, because I ran for senior senator. And I ran against a very popular football player. Uh, lot of people thought that he was going to win, uh, but, uh, I had a slogan say, "You vote for Ed, the campus will not be dead." And what I meant by that, uh, girls had a curfew, uh, a ten o'clock and some like freshmens had to be in at seven at one time. And we worked it so that the curfews could be much better, and also, uh, the strategy I used on this football player, he used some of his fellow football players to help him campaign, and he went to a few of the girls dorms, but I covered all five girl dorms, when he covered the three boys' dorm anytime, the majority is, uh, well, anytime you cover the majority, and if you can get a point over and you prove your point, then that's more likely the w-, for you to win, because at Florida A&M there, during the time that I was there, there were three girls, three young ladies to every young man.

FIELDWORKER: Well, I know you young men enjoyed that!

INFORMANT: Eh, oh indeed, eh I mean, I guess they did, really. Because I know some fellows had three and [laugh], several more. And, uh, two had [tape break]. Uh, fraternity brothers, he was my ca-, he also cam-, helped me to campaign, he was from, uh, DC.

FIELDWORKER: Wonderful city, that.

INFORMANT: Uh, really.

365 FIELDWORKER: Thank you very much!

INFORMANT: You're quite—