

*GOVERNOR'S MANSION
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT*

Interview

with

Governor Richard W. Riley,
Mrs. Ann "Tunky" Riley,
and son Ted Riley

Interviewers:

George Terry and Herbert J. Hartsook

Date:

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Location:

Lace House, Columbia, S.C.

Topics:

The Rileys reflect on their years in the Governor's Mansion, 1979-1987.

Transcriber:

Dorothy Hazelrigg

[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

Terry: We're here today with the former First Family that has the distinction of being the first family to live in the Governor's Mansion [for] eight straight years, Secretary of Education Richard Riley, and Mrs. Riley, the First Lady, and [their son] Ted Riley. We're very pleased to have you here with us to do this interview. What was it like the first day you moved into the Mansion?

Gov. Riley: Tunky...?

Mrs. Riley: Confusion. [laughter] We started with breakfast before the inauguration. So it was very, very early in the morning, and we had this formal breakfast. We were all dressed up, and the children...

Ted Riley: TV cameras.

Mrs. Riley: ...were terrified.

Ted Riley: Scared to death.

Mrs. Riley: But we got through that, and we got through the Inaugural Address, and...

Gov. Riley: Prayer service.

Mrs. Riley: Parade. Quite a full day. Then we had a reception at the Mansion, which was my idea, which was a terrible idea, as it turned out. Because the ball was that night, and so everybody that we knew showed up, and they stayed and stayed and stayed and stayed, and we were not even going to have time to get dressed. So finally, we all went upstairs, and were trying to get dressed for the ball, and people were still walking around, opening doors, and coming in. And tell them the next morning what happened.

Gov. Riley: One thing about the Mansion, as lovely as it is, and historic, is it's not as private as it could be. Of course, we had thousands of people—literally, it was a block and a half long, the line. I know my hand was almost bloody when we shook hands with all that crowd, and loved every minute of it. And of course, people had been around all during the day or whatever.

The next day, they told us my shower was being fixed, and we had to come out of my room and go down the hall and use Ted's shower. So I was naked and had a towel around my waist, the first morning, I had just gotten up, it was seven o'clock in the morning or whatever, and I walked out in the hall, and there were these two elderly

ladies. I said, "How are you?" They said, "Ah, Governor, we're from Pomaria. We strongly supported you in the election." I said, "Well, I hope you don't see anything today that'll turn you against me." [laughter] So that was my first experience...

Mrs. Riley: The first morning!

Gov. Riley: ...of sharing my home with the general public. We loved that, though, and everything about it. One thing about Tunky's policy, and my policy, and our staff, was to have it open to the public as much as possible. On school days, for example, we had often as many as a thousand schoolchildren come through the facility, and all of the grounds, and it was their Mansion, and that's the way we wanted people to think about it.

Terry: Tell me about the day after all the ceremonies and tours and things like that, just being in the private residence. I know that you opened it up a lot to the public, especially the first floor. But what was it like in terms of just kind of walking around the Governor's Mansion for the first time, to be able to see it without a whole lot of people?

Mrs. Riley: I remember that first night. I couldn't sleep because I was so excited. I remember getting up and just walking the whole place over and over, around and around, and going in every room. Ted and Hubert were thirteen and fifteen, and so they had a lot of friends that came down for the inauguration. They came over the next day. Tell them their impression of your dialing nine...

Ted Riley: From a thirteen-year-old's perspective, I remember being scared, sitting there the first day, and said, "I have to use the restroom," but I was scared to go in the house. Like I was in a museum. I said, "I can't go to the restroom in this place," and that happened to be my house for the next eight years. I came from playing football in the front yard to coming in this Mansion. It was kind of a shock to us as kids. We weren't used to anything like that.

Mrs. Riley: We had butlers, and cooks...

Ted Riley: Yes, and the first day they said, "All you have to do is dial nine, and ask for a drink, or lunch, or whatever you want." We were all scared to do it and challenging each other. Who was the first one to try to dial nine—did I win that or Hubert?

Mrs. Riley: I believe so.

Ted Riley: I think I was the first one to call up and say, "May I have a Coke, please?" But we got very used to that, unfortunately. [laughter]

Mrs. Riley: We all got used to it real fast.

Terry: How did you all get to know the staff, because they were with you for eight years? I'm sure many of them became dear friends.

Mrs. Riley: As far as the Mansion staff was..., most everybody we brought with us, or hired after we got here, except for Willie Brown, who is also still here, the chief butler. He actually did the interviews and managed his staff. We would get to know them through working with them. The chef was already here, and obviously, we worked a lot with him. He was a wonderful chef, as we talked about. Ted and Hubert didn't have any friends, of course, when they moved here [from Greenville], and were very lonely, and so they got to know the staff a lot better than we did, because...

Ted Riley: They were extended family.

Mrs. Riley: ...they spent a lot of time down in the kitchen, talking with them.

Terry: I can imagine after eight years they were part of the family.

Mrs. Riley: But there was a pretty big turnover in the butler staff. Pretty big turnover.

Ted Riley: But the butlers and SLED [State Law Enforcement Division] agents, they were like extended family to me. Still are today.

Mrs. Riley: SLED agents were pretty much with us the whole eight years, and they did become like family.

Gov. Riley: Well, Ted and Hubert would play basketball. Of course, the butlers were inmates, and we really got to know a number of them very well. Of course, we tried to do what we could to influence them to study and learn and try to improve themselves.

Mrs. Riley: We had some literacy training at one point. I'd forgotten about that.

Gov. Riley: But we really became very close with them and they were very, very loyal to us.

Ted Riley: Became very street-smart, also. Learned a lot. [laughter]

Terry: I'm sure you had some big events there, significant events in terms of dignitaries, and folks like that. Do you remember any of those in particular?

Gov. Riley: Well, we were doing a lot of entertaining of foreign industrialists, businesspeople, people from all over the country, but really, all over the world. South Carolina was attracting a lot of German industry and Japanese industry, UK, French, Holland. We had just many, many evenings that we had top industrialists from Japan, or wherever, and it was a very, very exciting time to be governor. We got to know these people well. We still do know them and keep up with a lot of them in correspondence, or if we're traveling now. And they love South Carolina. Especially the Japanese, because of our golf. All of them loved golf, it seemed. We had lots of lovely events, and we would bring in artists from all around the state, who would perform, and have just lovely, lovely dinners there. I think it really helped us a great deal in pulling in a lot of industry, making them feel at home. Often time, they spent the night in the Lace House or in the Mansion. We used the Mansion a lot for those kinds of events.

Terry: The Verner Awards were created under your administration, weren't they? [The Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Awards for the Arts, the highest honor the state gives in the arts, are presented annually by the South Carolina Arts Commission to organizations, businesses and individuals participating in the growth and advancement of the arts in South Carolina.]

Mrs. Riley: No. They already were created, but we instituted entertaining them here. We would have a huge reception.

Terry: That must have been an interesting thing, to entertain some of those people.

Mrs. Riley: Some of the people that came to speak, they'd stay about two and a half, three days, because they would have to speak to the legislature, and then we would have a dinner party the first night, and then they'd speak to the legislature, do the awards, and then we'd have a huge reception. Usually in the Boylston Garden after we got it restored. We had Tony Randall was one of our guest speakers, and...

Gov. Riley: Christopher Reeve.

Mrs. Riley: Christopher Reeve. Superman came later.

Ted Riley: I beat Superman in tennis, is what I used to tell all my friends who played over here.

Mrs. Riley: Colleen Dewhurst was another wonderful person.

Gov. Riley: I remember we had Dizzy Gillespie one evening with us. He was a great South Carolinian from Cheraw.

Ted Riley: He was a Muslim. He had to get up at five [o'clock], didn't he? Four or five, and pray?

Gov. Riley: Prayed several times.

Ted Riley: Interesting.

Gov. Riley: But I used to see him around at different places, and he would always tell about the most exciting thing in his life was to grow up in Cheraw and then all of a sudden found himself spending the night in the Governor's Mansion, which he thought he'd never have the chance to do. And he called his mother there that night, and talked a long time with her.

Terry: That's wonderful.

Mrs. Riley: He was such a wonderful man.

Gov. Riley: Ella Fitzgerald we had to spend the night. We had members of the House and Senate, if we were working on a major bill like the Education Improvement Act. It was very common for us to pull in key people and invite their wives in, and spend the evening with them and work. It was very effective to have them there in the Mansion, and all the history, and talking about doing something for South Carolina that was important. It really set an ambience that was very good for being successful. Whether it was the legislature, or with business and industry leaders.

Terry: Now, during your watch, Mrs. Riley, you were responsible for a lot of this [Mansion] complex, and I think it's fitting that we're sitting here in the Lace House, because the complex really became a complex during your administration. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Mrs. Riley: I was going to say, when you asked me about the first day, I think the first day I fell in love with the gardens. I'd never seen Boylston Garden. The state had just acquired the Boylston House just before we got here.

Gov. Riley: Like a jungle.

Ted Riley: Yes, there were wild dogs.

Mrs. Riley: The Lace House was acquired during McNair's term, so they started restoring it, and then the Wests, and the Edwards pretty much finished it. During the Edwards administration, they bought Boylston House, so that was my prize, and then I didn't know about the garden. Of course, that garden was started in the 1830s. It was a jungle, but that was really my love the whole time I was here, and still is. Then we wanted to close the street and make a complex out of it, and it took two terms. Definitely.

Terry: Did you acquire any furniture or paintings?

Mrs. Riley: Oh, a lot. One of the best things we acquired, I think, is the breakfront in the large drawing room, which was very old, and it was found by the Museum of Early Southern Furniture, that place at Winston-Salem. The reason they let us have it—I mean, we bought it, we had to raise the money to buy it, but at a very good price—was because it was so restored. Of course, the outside was so beautiful we really didn't care. They didn't consider it museum quality, and sold it to us for a...

Gov. Riley: It was an antique, but they found it, as I recall, in a chicken house.

Mrs. Riley: A chicken coop from a barn...

Gov. Riley: They realized what a wonderful piece of furniture it was.

Mrs. Riley: Oh, my gosh. That was really one of the prizes. Then we acquired some wonderful Southern art that this man in Georgia, a doctor, started collecting Southern art very early.

Gov. Riley: We temporarily had one of the numbers that Jasper Johns painted. Jasper Johns is my first cousin. His mother and my father were brother and sister. We never have been able to afford one of his paintings, but the family loaned us "Number Six," one of his famous paintings.

Terry: That's great. I remember when you were governor, you were over at the President's House one Sunday, and McKissick Museum had an exhibition of Jasper Johns' work, and you all went over there right after leaving the President's House to see that exhibit.

Gov. Riley: Yes.

Terry: We have a very dear friend here at the University [of South Carolina], Bob Ochs. I don't know if you know him. He was chair of the history department for probably twenty-five years, and he and Jasper Johns have been friends since 1948.

Mrs. Riley: Oh, is that right?

Terry: He got real sick, and I called Jasper Johns' sister, who I think lives in Edisto. I said, "I think Jasper Johns would want to know that he's real sick, and I don't know if he's going to come out of it." He did, but I went to the hospital that afternoon to see Bob, he's eighty-six years old. I walked into his room, and he said, "He just called." [laughter]

Gov. Riley: Is that right? I declare. He's a very thoughtful person, Jasper is, and a wonderful artist.

Terry: I remember your father talking about him, too. Talking about what a nice person he was, and how the family was just very nice and kind.

I want to ask all three of you this, separately, what is your fondest memory of living in the house?

Gov. Riley: I can think of a thousand things, needless to say, but as you asked the question, I was thinking of sitting on the front porch...

Ted Riley: I was too, rocking chairs...

Gov. Riley: ...with Tunky on Saturday morning, after working all week, sixteen, eighteen hours a day, in those rocking chairs, with the yellow jasmine all around us on a pretty day, about this time of the year, a lovely time of the year in the spring, and walking through the gardens, and enjoying the whole area. It's just thoughts that are very special to me. The house itself has kind of a historic feeling to it, and Tunky talks about walking around in the evenings, and looking around. We would do that, all of us. But you did get this feeling that a lot of history had taken place. I was very proud of all the previous governors that served and lived in the house with their families. I'm very proud of the line of governors that had preceded me. We were all friends, those that were living, [from] both parties. It didn't matter. We were all South Carolinians, and it was a very close-knit feeling. You could really sense that as you walked around the house, kind of the history of the place.

Terry: How about you, Mrs. Riley?

Mrs. Riley: One of my favorite things that we did, we had a wonderful friend who was a pianist that would entertain for us a lot on that beautiful piano that Governor [James F.] Byrnes and Mrs. Byrnes donated to the Mansion.

Gov. Riley: Julian Parrish[?].

Mrs. Riley: I think about some wonderful evenings that were musical. We did that a lot, almost every time we entertained we'd have somebody play the piano or some sort of entertainment. That was probably my favorite thing I remember.

Terry: How about you, Ted?

Ted Riley: Probably the people I got to meet and know, from the staff that became extended family, and also entertaining friends, friends that didn't have the opportunity to live in the Governor's Mansion, and to bring them over to spend the night, especially people that really appreciated it. That's the type of people I enjoyed bringing over to experience it with us, and we did it all the time.

Mrs. Riley: I used to do bed checks.

Ted Riley: That's right.

Mrs. Riley: Who all was there.

Ted Riley: That was one of my fondest memories, to see the joy it brought other people, that we could bring in to enjoy. As Dad told us every day, "This isn't your house. This is the people's house." Which we understood. He also told us every day that this wasn't real life. "You're going to be leaving here soon." [laughter] And we understood that, too. When I left, I was ready to go. I'd been told every day, every night at dinner, "This isn't real life, son."

Terry: But, you know, the second term... You were going to stay home, here, for four more years? Certainly that must have been a great feeling to know that you were not going to have to leave the things that you loved.

Mrs. Riley: It was. We were thrilled. And we were so into it by then. There was so much that we hadn't done. On Dick's side with the education [reform], that was just

really starting, and without a second term, it would have never happened. I needed two terms to do all these things. I had to close the street!

Gov. Riley: The people had changed the constitution in 1980. I was elected in November of '78, and started serving in '79. In '80, the vote was to change the constitution, which would then have enabled me to run for a second term, and it carried by a very large majority. I was proud of that. Though everybody knew I was contemplating running, I still hadn't announced yet.

Then when I was elected to the second term, I can't tell you the difference of how much more you can do after you have developed those relationships with the key leaders in government, and your staff, all through the state system, and people in every city and every precinct almost. A state the size of South Carolina, you really just develop these wonderful relations. Going into the second year [term?], I was able to take on something like the total education reform. I couldn't have possibly done that in the first year. It takes you a while, just like living in the Mansion is a different kind of life than you've ever lived. You get into that, then, and appreciate it more and more, but it becomes part of making things happen.

Terry: Were there any major construction projects? I know the shower. [laughter] Anything else in terms of...

Mrs. Riley: There was nothing major. We restored the Boylston House, that's probably the most major... We did a lot of minor things. Moving the Kenner House. You know, falling down, or being rotted away. There were people in Columbia that were convinced that was a historic house, and we could not tear it down. So then we had to figure out how to get rid of it, and finally did. The city took it on and we had to get it moved across the street. It was definitely major.

Gov. Riley: People did that, and then restored it, lawyers, I think.

Mrs. Riley: And then it caught on fire. That was so sad. I don't know if it's restored again now. I haven't seen it lately. But that was a big project. But then, getting the city to vote to close the street was major. That took several years.

Gov. Riley: And the gates and all were contributed, and I think we raised the money, didn't we, for the fountain?

Mrs. Riley: What we did is, through the foundation, we organized antiques symposiums. We called them "The Governor's Mansion Antique and Art Symposiums," and we had, I think, fifteen across the state over about a three-year period. It was more to

make people aware of the Mansion, than raising money, and that was what we built on then later to raise the money for all these projects. That was a wonderful learning experience.

Gov. Riley: What was the person's name? Garrett?

Mrs. Riley: Wendell Garrett, the editor of *Antiques* magazine, was our lead speaker. He did it every year, every place. We did it in Aiken and Florence and Charleston and...

Gov. Riley: They were very successful.

Mrs. Riley: ...Rock Hill, and just all over the state. Greenville, Spartanburg. Because of Wendell Garrett, we were able to get the top people in the United States to come speak on their particular subject. We'd do silver one year, and antique furniture one year, or crystal or porcelain or something. Then people would sign up. We'd have sort of a nucleus of people that would follow us wherever we went, and they would have wonderful dinners and parties and it was really a lot of fun. It was also a learning experience for me, just as the garden was, because we hired [landscape architect] Robert Marvin, to help us with that.

Gov. Riley: He was a tremendous help. From Walterboro.

Mrs. Riley: Then we had a professor from Clemson that worked with the plant material.

Gov. Riley: Then the architects from Clemson, landscape architects...

Mrs. Riley: A lot of those were volunteer people. Dr. [Frederick W.] Thode was absolutely wonderful. He'd come down, and we walked the garden, and we had a tape recorder. As we walked the garden, we'd tape everything he'd say. Then we'd try to go out and do it. Six months later he'd come back, and then we'd walk the garden again. He'd tell us what to buy and what to plant. So we spent a million hours, either raising money or spending money, to accomplish these goals that we would have. As I say, I've never gotten over it. I love flowers.

Gov. Riley: Some of the events that we had, as I think back about them, like the Easter egg hunt for the blind children. Who was it that fixed the eggs with the sound system?

Mrs. Riley: Southern Bell, the Pioneers?

Gov. Riley: The Pioneers, you know, the retired people from Southern Bell.

Mrs. Riley: They put beepers in the eggs.

Gov. Riley: So they could hear the eggs.

Ted Riley: That was neat. They loved that.

Mrs. Riley: That was the cutest... We did that a number of years.

Gov. Riley: Every year, as I recall.

Mrs. Riley: We did project children for the Irish.

Gov. Riley: The Irish, they would bring the Protestants and the Catholic children together.

Mrs. Riley: We'd have a big hot dog...

Gov. Riley: We'd have a big event out there. But we had enormous events, when we would have the signing of a bill, or a new industry coming to town, and the Mansion was always the focus of all that.

Mrs. Riley: We did one big legislative party.

Terry: Each year?

Mrs. Riley: Every year, every spring, we'd do a huge... We'd do something different each time.

Gov. Riley: Then one for the Supreme Court.

Mrs. Riley: And every Christmas we'd have the Supreme Court. Then the constitutional officers. We'd have a big dinner for them.

Ted Riley: I remember Girls' State coming. [laughter]

Mrs. Riley: Oh, yes.

Ted Riley: [I] always enjoyed getting up for school early. Oh, Boys' State came also, by the way.

Terry: We just talked about the Verner Awards a little while ago. You all also had a big reception every year for the people that had been invited to the Verner Awards. I came...

Mrs. Riley: It was huge.

Terry: Very nice.

Mrs. Riley: As I say, the last few years, we had it in the Boylston Gardens. The weather was wonderful. Because it was usually too many people for the Mansion. One year, it rained, and we had it in the Capitol. There just was no room here for all those people. But that was always a pleasure. I loved the Verner Awards.

Gov. Riley: And Tunky, I remember when [television mini-series] "Chiefs" was being filmed in Chester, and Charlton Heston and a number of the stars in "Chiefs" came. We had a lovely dinner for the whole staff, performers, of "Chiefs."

Mrs. Riley: And we did dinners out in beautiful weather. We would put round tables all around the pool and float flowers. We really had fun. We did a lot of luncheons on the terrace. We used the pool house quite a bit.

Terry: I'm going to ask Herb [Hartsook] if he would sit in this chair and ask you just a couple of other questions. I'm sure he's going to have a couple that he wants to ask after beginning to go through your papers, if that's okay.

Gov. Riley: Sure.

Terry: Won't take a whole lot of time, because we want to go over to the house, if you have a chance. Herb?

Hartsook: I just wanted to ask about what it felt like leaving the house. I mean, you'd been there eight years, it had been your home. Leaving any house is traumatic, but leaving a place like that must just be heart-wrenching, in a way.

Gov. Riley: Well, it wasn't really heart-wrenching. First of all, we came expecting only to be there for four years. Then we were blessed with another four years, and really, after you're in a position of that kind for eight years, you kind of understand, and you

know the time's coming, and you get prepared for it. It was not like it was any shock, because we knew we were leaving. Of course, I could not run again. So really, it was not that traumatic. It was sad in many ways. But we'd had such a wonderful experience there. When I think back about that time, I was interested in learning how to drive again. [laughter] Those things that I had not been able to do for eight years. We were going to buy a home in Greenville, and we were into all of that, moving back home to Greenville. It was really a kind of transition time, but I didn't recall it as being sad. I'm very proud of our time there.

Ted Riley: I'll never forget the last day, walking down the steps, and the whole staff lined up. We were all crying, walking down the steps, just about.

Mrs. Riley: That was sad, that part.

Ted Riley: That was. But we were, definitely...

Mrs. Riley: But I'm like Dick. The eight years is long enough.

Ted Riley: We were mentally ready to leave at that...

Mrs. Riley: We knew that it was time to go. But I thought I was really going to miss it. I just knew I was, and I wondered how I was going to cope with it. The next morning, we had a condominium that we were staying in, across town. And the next morning, I woke up, and it was like "Free at last!" There's no schedule, there's nobody telling me where to go, what to do.

Ted Riley: It was like it was all a dream.

Mrs. Riley: I was just looking forward to starting over, and learning to cook.

Ted Riley: I had to teach them how to order at McDonald's again, and stuff like that. Fast food. [laughter]

Mrs. Riley: But it was such a great experience.

Gov. Riley: Tunky and I always liked our children to work, so when we were here, that was a little bit of a complication. So Ted got a job over in the Bojangles [fast food restaurant], which is about a block from here.

Ted Riley: Right down Elmwood.

Gov. Riley: I remember one day we were over there, and he was emptying the garbage, or whatever. One of the butlers was with us, and he went over and insisted on helping Ted empty the garbage at Bojangles. [laughter] But Ted lasted all right, and I think he learned a lot.

Hartsook: What was a typical day like? What time would you get up? How much time would you have for family things as opposed to official things?

Gov. Riley: Well, we would get up early, but not real early. It was probably six-thirty, seven. Unless I had a breakfast, and that was not infrequent.

Mrs. Riley: We did a lot of breakfasts.

Gov. Riley: We had a lot of breakfasts at the Mansion, especially if we had guests that were there, and all of those were times we would work. I mean, if you had industrialists there, and you had a lovely evening, the next morning was a very good time to really get into serious business with them. So we used the breakfasts a lot. We had that lovely little breakfast nook. It had light from the outside, and flowers, and we used that room a lot, and enjoyed breakfasts. We'd have big formal breakfasts, too. But when we didn't have guests there, normally we would either eat in our bedroom, and I was usually working on a speech or something I was going to do that day. When I think back, my thoughts seem like they're always of work. I always had something on my mind, something I was working on.

Hartsook: Where did you work in the house?

Gov. Riley: Well, I had a desk beside the bed there.

Ted Riley: I can see you right now.

Gov. Riley: I would work there just about every night.

Mrs. Riley: He's always had a desk beside the bed.

Ted Riley: Always.

Gov. Riley: I went to bed usually late at night. I'd come in and work, and Tunky would go sound to sleep. I would work there until eleven-thirty, twelve o'clock usually.

Ted Riley: Rewriting all his speechwriters' speeches, as I've heard him tell it, over the years. Still today.

Hartsook: Where would you work?

Mrs. Riley: I had a real little office, right in the front over the porch. That's the prettiest place in the Mansion. Mrs. Edwards had that decorated for me, because she had to leave right when it got ready. I think I was the first one to ever use it. So I had a perfect spot. All of the staff was upstairs with us, so that was not a real good situation. We eventually moved everybody to the Boylston House, but when we were there, everybody, the Mansion director, the curator, the secretary, everybody was upstairs right by my bedroom door. That's what I mean about not having any people around is kind of nice. The first time I woke up after the inauguration of the next governor, I thought, "Whoa, it's so quiet. There's nobody here."

Gov. Riley: Yes, you'd literally walk out our bedroom door, and of course, down the steps was kind of public space, so people were milling around, always, down there. Right to the left was the Mansion office. There were always two or three people in there, or whatever, and then there'd be people all around.

Mrs. Riley: And the phone ringing and computers.

Gov. Riley: Everything was public except the actual [spot] where your door closed for the bedroom. And you get used to that, and that's just part of the way it was. I understand under the new arrangement at the Mansion, it's going to be a little different, and I think that'll be better, to have the living quarters be somewhat more private than they were when we were there.

Hartsook: Did anybody take you under their wing? We all know what the governor does, at least we think we know. I think very few people know what the first lady does, and I wondered if anybody took you under their wing, particularly, and talked to you about what you could do.

Mrs. Riley: Actually, I called people a lot. Ann Edwards. I called very frequently, and she was so helpful, and Lois West was another contact I had. It's on-the-job training. You really don't have...

Gov. Riley: Your Mansion Commission you worked closely with...

Mrs. Riley: ...anybody to tell you what to do, and I felt like, maybe not the whole time, but it seemed like at first I was totally reacting instead of getting my act together to figure out what I wanted to do. I really wanted to get involved in education issues, which I finally did. But there's so much to do, just at the Mansion and with the collection and with the garden, so I was torn between the different things I wanted to do. But you really don't have anybody to help you. Each first lady has different interests and different abilities.

Gov. Riley: Tell about some of your Mansion Commission people. Seemed to me like you were very close.

Mrs. Riley: Had a wonderful Commission. We were. We worked so hard together.

Gov. Riley: Annie Webster, and...

Mrs. Riley: We had a nucleus of people that had been on it for a long time.

Gov. Riley: Rachel Wilson.

Mrs. Riley: We'd add new ones, but we always tried to keep a nucleus, so they had a history. We met once a month. We did a lot of trips to go to other places, similar, to see gardens and see other houses that were restored. We had a lot of decisions to make, a lot of money to raise, so it was an important part of my being there.

Gov. Riley: I was trying to think, Tunky, of who in that group were some of our authorities on the Mansion. Gus Graydon, I know.

Mrs. Riley: Gus Graydon was definitely an authority. Gus Graydon. If he didn't know it, he made it up. [laughter]

Gov. Riley: He answered every question. He was a great guy.

Mrs. Riley: We had one story that I thought was so cute. It was in the Mansion history book that was written while Mrs. Edwards was there. It was about the chandelier in the small dining room. It was a Russian chandelier and was given to Mrs. Pickens because she was supposed to have had an affair with the Tsar, and we used to tell this wonderful story. Then we had these people from the Smithsonian down to help us redecorate the Mansion and restore that beautiful wallpaper that was in the small drawing room. We were having lunch together one day, and Alan [?] looked up and said, "That is a beautiful Philadelphia chandelier." I said, "What do you mean, Philadelphia? That came from

Russia, from the Tsar.” [laughter] He said, “No, wait a minute.” He got a ladder and crawled up there, and it was written right there, “Philadelphia.” I said, “Alan, how could you?” Gus had made that one up out of his head. But Gus was quite a historian and very helpful.

And then, Dr. Fraser Wilson from Charleston was an authority on antiques, and he’s still on the Commission. He would bring in things from everywhere. He just combed the country looking for antiques, and a lot of times we couldn’t afford them, but we’d try. We would buy as many things as we could possibly get the money for.

Gov. Riley: And here in Columbia...

Mrs. Riley: Patty Whitelaw was a trained decorator.

Gov. Riley: And the other person here in Columbia is...

Mrs. Riley: Betsy McKay. We had the man from Brookgreen Gardens come on, and he was very helpful with the garden part.

Gov. Riley: What is the man’s name in Columbia?

Mrs. Riley: Jack Scoville?

Gov. Riley: Jack Scoville. He was a big help to you.

Mrs. Riley: He was wonderful. But those people became like my family, because I spent many hours with them.

Gov. Riley: But some of those people we inherited. They were there when the Edwards [were], and I think before, but they...

Mrs. Riley: Some were [there back] into West [’s term].

Gov. Riley: ...were just authorities on the Mansion, and they were just tremendously helpful.

Terry: Let me close, and then we can go over to the old homestead and take a look. First off, I want to thank you all so much for giving us your time today, and all of your great memories. I’m looking forward to writing this part of the book, again. The thing I want to thank all three of you for is what you’ve done for higher education, and K

through 12 as well, because I know it has to be a family endeavor, and I just want to thank you for everything you've done in terms of education.

I also want to thank you, a lot of people don't know this, but I know it, I know what you've done for the arts, not just in this state, but in the country. I want to thank you for that, too, because NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] was under a lot of duress for a few years there, and I know, quietly, behind the scenes, you did a whole lot to keep them afloat, and I want to applaud you for that.

Gov. Riley: Well, I thank you very much. I have always felt, and Tunky has too, that the arts are an important part of education, really from preschool all the way through, and if you miss out on that, and sometimes when people are cutting out things, tragically, they'll cut out music or the arts, and it really is unfortunate. I think people have turned on that, but I have always felt that arts should be a part of the core curriculum all the way through school, and the creative side of things now is so important in this information era, and the arts are important to that.

Terry: Thank you very much.

[End of interview]