Interview

with

Harry Clayton Walker
Interviewer:  
Herbert J. Hartsook

Date: 
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Location:  
Mr. Walker’s Greenville office

Synopsis  
Harry Walker (1925-2008) served as Governor Fritz Hollings’ legal assistant from 1959 to 1963. He was responsible for all legal matters that reached the Governor’s office, advised Hollings on the constitutionality of bills sent for the governor’s signature, oversaw statewide appointments and those requiring Senate confirmation, and served as disaster coordinator for South Carolina and as liaison with all law enforcement. This latter capacity proved particularly challenging, as Walker worked closely with SLED chief Pete Strom to ensure the peace during this watershed period of civil rights activities. As Walker notes, “When I went to work in the morning, I never knew where I was going to lay my head...that night.” In this interview, he reflects on this service, particularly civil rights matters, and provides his appraisal of Hollings’ gubernatorial legacy.

Transcriber:  
Larry Grubbs

Citation:  
Harry C. Walker Interview, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina
Hartsook: Mr. Walker, could you tell us when and where you were born and a little bit about what your parents were like, what your father did for a living, and where you were educated?

Walker: I was born in Greenville, South Carolina. My father and mother separated when I was small. My mother worked at a number of jobs. Of course, I was born in 1925, so those early years were years during and right after the Depression, when things were scarce and jobs were not easy to come by. But, for the major part of her life, my mother worked at the Greenville Public Library and continued to work there until she retired. She was in charge of the binding and mending of books for the Greenville Public Library. As far as my education is concerned, I was educated in the public schools of Greenville County and I graduated from high school in 1942. Of course, at that time, as you know, the World War was on and it was only a matter of time before I would turn eighteen and be eligible for the draft. I became involved with the War Manpower Program and was training in radio, electricity and radar. [I] started at the high school here in Greenville and subsequently [enrolled] with the University of Alabama, where we were being taught by the faculty of the college there. Subsequently, [I studied] at Auburn University, and from there [went] back to Fort McPherson in Atlanta, Georgia.

I was residing in Atlanta, Georgia and working at Fort McPherson when I was drafted, and subsequently entered the Army Air Corps and served in Europe in the course of my tour of duty. Upon returning to my home, I didn't know where I was going or what I was going to do. I had known from the time I was thirteen years old what I wanted to do, but it was a dream because my family didn't have the money and I knew of no way to get through college at that time. The amount of financial aid and so forth at that time was not what it is today. But, I knew from the time I was thirteen years old I wanted to be a lawyer and that I wanted to attend Duke University.

Of course, as you know, on my discharge from military service, a grateful government passed the GI Bill of Rights and I was off and running. [I] went to Duke, where I was accepted. Entered as a freshman, realizing I had only four years of eligibility under the GI Bill of Rights. I tried to move things as rapidly as I could. [I] started off taking three semester hours of credits in excess of what was recommended and continued to do that every semester I was there. From the time I entered, I started knocking on the law school doors in an effort to get in law school. After I had completed my freshman and sophomore years, I was advised that if I would take two
recommended courses during summer school, they would accept me as a first-year student at Duke Law School the following fall. I took the two courses and went on home and received a letter acknowledging that I had been accepted for [my] first year at the law school. [I] did complete my three years at Duke Law School where I received my degree. That's my education.

Hartsook: Why were you so intrigued with the legal career at such an early age?

Walker: I don't know except for the fact that I always did have a flair for languages, a flair for engaging in debate. I don't know what particularly made me decide I wanted to be a lawyer any more than I know why I decided I wanted to go to Duke University. But that was a dream I had and it was a dream that fortunately became reality.

Hartsook: We hear so many people that went to law school at the University of South Carolina say that the contacts they made are invaluable to them in their later career. Do you feel like you missed anything by not having those South Carolina contacts?

Walker: That is definitely a distinct advantage, and I'm sure that I missed some of that, although when I started practicing law, the bar across the state was a pretty friendly bar, and in the course of practicing law you established contacts across the state. So, I don't feel that I was really hampered by that. The four years that I spent with Governor Hollings, of course, placed me in contact with lawyers across the state as well as [with] members of the judiciary across the state, as well as other people. That, in later years, did prove advantageous to me.

Hartsook: Do you think that your education at Duke gave you a good grounding for practicing law?

Walker: I feel that I received an excellent legal education. Duke, of course, is one of the preeminent law schools. It's a hard school. You have to produce or else, but I feel I had a well-rounded education which did well prepare me for the practice of law. During my four years with Governor Hollings, I encountered some areas that I was expected to handle that I had not been prepared for in law school, but, by and large, I have found I received an education which well suited me for the practice of law.
Hartsook: Can you tell us how you became associated with Fritz Hollings?

Walker: That is an interesting situation. I had not been involved in any of Fritz's campaigns. I never have been involved in politics, period. After he was elected Governor, I was at a local Bar function and in the course of a conversation with a good friend and longtime acquaintance of Governor Hollings [James R. Mann], the subject of a legal assistant, to be a member of Fritz's staff, came up. The friend asked me if I would be interested in being considered for that position. I was young at that time and it was an intriguing proposition and I told him certainly I would be interested. Of course, I thought that he was simply talking and never expected to hear any more out of it. Shortly after that, I received a call from Fritz and he asked me to meet him in Columbia so that he could talk with me about the position. I went to Columbia and had a rather lengthy conversation with him. I was very impressed by him. I learned a little of what his expectations were [and] was advised that there were several others under consideration but that he would let me hear from him.

Hartsook: And what did he tell you he would want most from his legal counsel?

Walker: He was not specific in the sense of narrowing it down into any particular area. He expected a legal assistant to handle any and all legal matters that arose in the office. It was within the context of that particular demand that I recall him seeking to find out whether or not I was qualified.

Hartsook: What impressed you at that first meeting?

Walker: Frankly, I was impressed by his openness and his frankness and the ease with which he and I were able to communicate. We were pretty well on common ground. He and I are about a
year or so apart in age, if I recall correctly. I, at that point in time, didn't know whether I was high on the list of possibilities or whether I was simply one in the pack. It impressed me that he was open and free and the type person that I felt I could work with.

Hartsook: What kind of legal practice did you have at that time?

Walker: I had a general practice, practicing in a number of areas. At the same time, I was the prosecuting attorney for the city of Greenville. I had been hired as an assistant to the city attorney to handle criminal cases that arose in the municipal court.

Hartsook: When you actually took over as legal assistant, you had to give all that up?

Walker: Oh yes. This was a full-time position and I had to close out my office. Of course, I was able to turn over what was still open, in terms of business being handled, to an associate in my office, whom I shared an office with. I had to resign my position with the city of Greenville.

Hartsook: What were your actual duties as legal assistant?

Walker: As legal assistant I found that I had a number of duties and a number of titles. I was responsible first and foremost for any and all legal matters that reached the Governor's office whether or not it involved matters in a particular county or locality in the state or whether it was where a citizen had a matter which he or she felt needed to be brought to the Governor's attention, or whether it involved one of the state agencies or one of the organs of government. Anything that was legal came across my desk. Secondly, I was responsible, with the help of a very efficient member of the secretarial staff, for [the] preparation of the appointments of county offices which had to be forwarded to the Senate for Senate approval. I was responsible for keeping up with the statewide offices that Fritz had the duty and responsibility of filling, keeping him advised of expiration dates of individuals who were interested in being appointed to various state positions, then conferring with him and/or other members of the staff in finally reaching a decision on who was to be appointed to the position, and then preparing the necessary appointment to be forwarded to the legislature for approval. In addition to that, every piece of legislation that was passed and sent to the Governor for his signature or his veto came across my desk and it was my job to check it for constitutionality as
well as for any other aspect of it that I felt ought to be called to the Governor's attention, and seeing
that that [a memo to that effect] was attached to it before it ever hit the Governor's desk.

In addition to that, I was designated as Disaster Coordinator for the state of South Carolina. Between myself and Chief Strom of SLED and the Columbia Civil Defense Office, we made sure, whenever a disaster occurred or was impending, that all of the people who should be alerted and who should be involved were in place and ready to act or react to any given disaster that occurred anywhere around the state. For instance, if a hurricane was approaching, the weather bureau would give me updates on its location every four hours. If it looked like it was going to strike, we would decide where it appeared it was going to strike, and usually Chief Strom and I as well as other law enforcement agencies would move to the area in order to make sure that everybody was prepared and that we did whatever we could to assist.

I was also in charge of liaison with all law enforcement in the state. At that time, I was actually considered also as a legal assistant to SLED and spent a great deal of time with [Chief] Pete Strom. Of course, there were various and sundry extra duties which Fritz would ask me to perform from time to time, but, basically, those were the areas in which I was expected to function.

The civil rights movement was very much a part of what was going on in the state of South Carolina at that time and as it developed I found myself spending a great deal of time involved with the civil rights movement and the maintaining of peace and order in the state. Those were my basic duties.

Hartsook: I got the impression from talking to Senator Hollings that he came to value your advice highly and that you were one of the people he would turn to for counsel on a difficult problem. Could you talk a little bit about how your relationship with him developed and how often you might meet with him, what kind of access you had to him?

Walker: The relationship was a fairly informal relationship. Of course, taking into consideration the fact that I was the only staff member who had not been previously involved with the governor, I came in cold, so to speak. And, considering the fact that not having been involved in politics [and] realizing that he was governor, I was a little in awe of approaching the governor. So, if there was any lack of informality, part of it was due to the fact that I was new and the other part was due to the fact that I probably was not as forward and as free and as easy as I normally would
have been. But, it was an informal relationship. I met with the governor any number of times in the office on any number of various matters, [I've] been up to the Mansion discussing things, had lunch with him at the Mansion. We've eaten together in more places than one. I could reach him and he was accessible almost any time I needed him. And, needless to say, the times he wanted me, I was available. Of course the only thing separating his office from my office was Betty Bargmann. His personal secretary's office lay between his office and my office; otherwise, it was simply a matter of walking out of my office door across the hall through his secretary's office and into his office. It was an informal relationship where we conferred from time to time as occasion demanded or whenever the need arose.

**Hartsook:** Would that normally be daily?

**Walker:** No, I wouldn't say it was daily. It would fluctuate but there'd be days when there was no necessity for either one of us to be in consultation with the other. Sometimes it might be more than once daily. It just depended on what was going on.

**Hartsook:** What was he like to work for?

**Walker:** Fritz, as you probably know, is a hard worker. He doesn't demand any more of anybody working for him, as far as I'm concerned, than he's willing to do himself. He did not seem to be the type that cared what time you got to the office or what time you left, but he did expect you to get the job done. Obviously, he wanted it done right. There have been very few times that I can recall when Fritz had any complaints so long as his people were there and so long as what needed to be done in the Governor's office was being done. So I found him easy to work for.

**Hartsook:** I've always found it interesting that he thinks of himself as a lawyer. Was that clear working for him when he was governor, that legal way of thinking?

**Walker:** The legal way of thinking was there. But it's interesting that you should ask that because I can recall on more than one occasion when a legal question would be at issue and we would be talking about it. I, of course, being the sole legal assistant on his staff, had the opportunity to consult with the Attorney General's office and to make use of the Attorney General's personnel
any time I needed them. I can recall occasions when I would confer with them before talking with Fritz about a legal matter, and I would tell him that the Attorney General's opinion is so and so, and Fritz would look up at me and say, "I want your opinion." But Fritz would not come on as the consummate lawyer who already had his opinion formulated, so that's very interesting that you should make that comment because it was clear that, oh yes, he was an excellent lawyer. I can recall listening to him in Washington when he was before members of the Supreme Court arguing his position with relation to the issue that he was there on, and it's clear that he was a good lawyer. But he did not try to override [me.] In other words, he expected me to be the lawyer in the office and that's what he let me be.

Hartsook: He seems to be someone that just soaks up information like a sponge. I've heard it said that he will assign different members of the staff to research the same issue because he's trying to get different viewpoints that he can weigh. Did he do that kind of thing as early as the time he was Governor?

Walker: I've seen him ask me as well as other members of the staff to write him up something on one issue or another. So yes, he did that back then. And yes, he did soak up information like a sponge. He was extremely knowledgeable.

Hartsook: Civil rights was a critical concern to all South Carolinians at that time. It was a time when we were seeing violence in other states and South Carolina was remarkably law-abiding and peaceful, and that was one of your primary activities. Can you talk a little bit about the civil rights era and what the Hollings administration had to do with maintaining that peaceful nature?

Walker: Yes. The first demonstration in South Carolina occurred in Greenville. It was at the downtown airport. The blacks were demonstrating because Jackie Robinson had flown in to the downtown airport and, as I recall it, was refused service at the cafeteria or restaurant there. Fritz Hollings had me and Chief Strom of SLED together and he told us, "We are going to enforce the laws as long as they're on the books. I am the chief law enforcement officer of the state but I want you to be sure that you understand what I mean." And he proceeded to make clear that we were going to enforce the law, it was not going to be enforced by rednecks, members of the Klan, [or] any other group other than the duly constituted law enforcement authorities. He wanted Chief Strom and
I to see that the law was enforced and when he said enforced, he made it clear, enforced as it should be enforced. No undue use of force, no use of force at all unless it was necessary. He wanted it done in a proper, humane manner without interference from any third parties of any ilk. We were strictly to abide by the laws as long as they were on the books. Having made that point clear, we knew what he had in mind.

*SLED Chief J.P. “Pete” Strom (in profile)*

[Tape 1, Side Two begins]

Walker: ...and we did attempt to do exactly that during the four years that he was in office. The law was enforced in such a way that we protected all participants as well as we could possibly do so. You see, in a sense, the civil rights movement of the sixties was a form of war. It was well organized. It was well structured. The leaders of the movement knew how to take advantage of whatever means were available to gain support [and] to raise funds. It was a type [of] situation that I don't think had ever been confronted in this country before. No books had been written on it, as far as I know. We had to learn as we went along. We had to, so to speak, write the book as we went. I think that with the directive of the governor and with the support of the law enforcement officers across the state, we did proceed to do what the governor felt needed to be done. In doing so, we were fortunate in having the type law enforcement division that we had.

Hartsook: Could you take one incident and just try to talk about the kind of planning that went into handling that incident, what kind of involvement you would have, and Chief Strom, and Governor Hollings?

Walker: Let me take two or three. For instance, let's take the first one here in Greenville. It was on New Year's Day, 1960, sleeted and snowing. First, we knew that the demonstration was going to be held, and we contacted what law enforcement authorities that needed to be contacted in order to make sure that we had as much presence as was necessary to handle any situation that might
arise and at the same time to maintain the even flow of traffic. The South Carolina Highway Patrol was an invaluable help in most of the demonstrations. They, normally, would leave the policing of the incident itself to other law enforcement agencies while they maintained crowd control and maintained flow of traffic. Invariably, whenever we asked for Highway Patrol assistance, they sent the biggest and best that they had and we had some good patrolmen. We would have to make sure that whatever facility was involved, if one was involved, like in this instance the downtown airport, that the manager of the airport knew what was happening. And we had to make sure that there was no problem from the inside, that we didn't have to concern ourselves with whether or not the personnel involved, as far as the facility was concerned, were going to interfere with what we were trying to do in terms of an orderly demonstration.

In this instance, they [the demonstrators] wanted to enter the terminal and have a prayer session. Well, that's a public facility, obviously, with passengers going and coming, but yes, we told them that they could take a group of a limited number inside. They cooperated with us; they decided on who was going in. Then the question was who's going to take them in. I said, “I'll lead them in.”

So, I went in with them and a limited number of them did have a prayer vigil inside the terminal, after which the demonstration broke up. Now, when the demonstration broke up, in terms of what you have to be prepared for, we had to make sure that no incidents occurred between onlookers and participants, after the incident was over. To that end we were patrolling the grounds. I remember there's a long drive down to the highway from the downtown airport in Greenville, and it's a pretty steep drive. One of the agents looked down at the end of the building and there was a minister who was extremely active in a large number of the racial demonstrations at that time, and that was Reverend Ivory from Rock Hill, I believe it was. He was in a wheelchair. The agent looked up and there he sat at the head of that ramp, at the end of that building, in his wheelchair. Well, all anybody had to do was push that chair or kick it and down that steep incline it would go. He rapidly ran up there to make sure that the Reverend was all right. The Reverend, it turns out, was just waiting for the people he was riding with to get their car and come on down by the side of the building and pick him up. But, the agent stayed there with him until they did pick him up. That sort of thing, in order to insure that things were under control.

Using Greenville as an example, to further answer your question of what do you have to do, the rank-and-file police officers didn't know how to react, what to do [and] what not to do. They didn’t know whether they would be backed by the city fathers or not. Of course, I don't think the city fathers had become of one mind in terms of how they should be handled. Chief Strom and I
came to Greenville; we set up a meeting ahead of time. We sat down and met with the city administration and with the chief of police and a few other pertinent individuals present. The outcome of that meeting was the city fathers knew that the Governor's office and SLED were available to them for assistance and they could arrive at a decision on how these matters should be handled knowing that assistance would be available from the state. Once they became of one mind, the city police officers knew that they were backed by the city administration, and consequently when the officers were called on to police the sit-ins they reacted like a group of West Pointers, they were top-notch. There were no incidents that resulted. It was handled in the way that the governor wanted it to be handled and the way the city fathers felt it should be handled. Those things don't just happen. As I said, you have to lay them out, be in touch, plan them, and see that the right people are at the right places with the right attitude. Always, you've got to be able to put your finger on the trouble-makers.

Now, I remember this one in Greenville at the airport. [We] had an officer who knew who he was looking for and walked over to a group and put them on notice that they were not going to have anything to do with handling this matter, that we were going to handle it, and if anybody so much as looked cross-eyed they would be removed from the scene. This is the way in which those elements who could cause problems were handled. Everybody from the Ku Klux Klan on down knew that we would not tolerate any interference from anybody who was not a duly authorized law enforcement officer in controlling the situation.

Occasionally we would not get notice in time to arrive at a demonstration until after it had taken place. Sometimes things would get a little out of hand. I remember we got notice that there was a demonstration being held in Orangeburg. By the time we got there, they had a number of blacks behind the fenced-in yard of the court house. They had turned the fire hoses on them when they were demonstrating. It was cool and they were wet and the students were trying to throw blankets over the fence to them and some of them tried to get in the boiler room when we arrived. I called Fritz and talked with him and explained the situation and after doing so we got them inside the court house so that they would be warm and dry. We put them all in the courtroom. I knew that pretty shortly one of the civil rights attorneys would show up. I believe it was Matthew Perry [who] showed up. I knew him, he knew me, and I told him where they were and escorted him to the courtroom and left him with them. I did tell him that I wanted to know if anybody was hurt or if anybody needed assistance. We always tried to take care of people. That's the way Fritz wanted it. Apparently there was nobody hurt, nobody needed assistance, or I would have been notified.
Every situation is different but all of them had one common thread, and that was do it the way it ought to be done, and that was the way that the Governor had instructed us that he wanted it done. Feelings did run high in those years as we all know. I can recall seeing SLED agents actually take elected officials in hand because the elected official was trying to provoke an incident between blacks who were on the street and him [by] walking down the street trying to force somebody to bump into him. I've seen them remove that individual just as quickly as we would have removed anybody, black or white, who tried to provoke an incident or make an incident that would make problems worse than it would normally be. We were out to protect the public.

I think that this is the sort of thing that Fritz deserves credit for. I don't think he's ever actually received the credit that he should have. Some of the things that you read would leave you to believe that grave deeds were done during Fritz's administration but I know of no proof that they were. Recently, there was an article by a black who claimed that after a march on the state capitol in Columbia during Fritz's administration, two officers had him in a cell and pulled some of his back teeth. That just did not happen. I know what incident he's talking about. I know when the march on the State House occurred because I was in charge of that one myself. Chief Strom was out of town and I had somebody from the Attorney General's office supposedly with me, but he was up on the steps of the State House. Of course, we had plenty of law enforcement available to maintain peace and good order. We had told them what they could and couldn't do. But then one of the blacks wanted to prevail on the other blacks to engage in civil disobedience. They proceeded to start marching around the State House. The legislature was in session. We told them they'd have to keep the noise to a minimum. They started singing, and it got louder and louder, and arrests followed. We marched them down to the city police department. I was there personally. I know full well that nobody was assaulted in any way while they were in the cell. I was there personally after the arrests were made because you had logistics problems that had to be taken care of any time charges were… put against anybody during the civil rights movement. You had to be sure that you had enough magistrates or other authorized personnel to prepare the necessary warrants. You had to look at the situation of whether or not they would want to be released or whether they wanted to stay in jail. So, you had to make arrangement for [the] feeding of large numbers. You had to make arrangements for the continuance of the lodging, in the event that they chose not to be released from custody. And it was in the process of putting the pieces together, so to speak, that I was actually down in the midst of the situation when the fellow says he was assaulted, and it just didn't happen.
Hartsook: You had mentioned earlier that Hollings had sent Chief Strom to some of the other areas that had had troubles, to determine what they had done well and what they had done poorly. What kind of a report did he bring back? I guess what I'm asking is, what kinds of things did you pinpoint that you knew you did not want to follow?

Walker: First, let me tell you how that came about. Because this again is one that I think Fritz deserves a lot of credit for. When the first black [Harvey Gantt] who was admitted to Clemson College applied for admission, Fritz came into my office and dropped his [Gantt’s] papers on my desk and said he wanted me to check him out and see whether or not he was qualified for admission to Clemson College. If he was, he was going to be admitted. If he wasn’t, he wasn’t going to be admitted. So, I turned to Chief Strom, and we satisfied ourselves that he was qualified for admission, and he was eminently qualified. A few days later, I walked back across the hall and into Fritz's office and put the papers on his desk and told him he was qualified. Fritz told me to get a hold of Chief Strom. He sat down with me and with Chief Strom and he told Chief Strom just as you have stated, that he wanted him to go to the other southern states where they had attempted to integrate and find out what mistakes they had made, because he said, “We're not going to make those mistakes. I want you to come back in [and] get with Harry Walker.” And then he told me, “I want you to draw up a plan for the peaceful integration of Clemson College.” So that's how it came about that Pete Strom visited the other southern states.

You want to know what things they [the other states] did wrong. Of course, we had national press in here, not just local news media. Not just press, but all avenues of news. They would sometimes incite incidents in some of the other states. You point a TV camera and people do things. Any time there was an incident that could be provoked, if there's a camera there, then odds are it's
going to happen. The blacks, just within the context of moving the cause further, any time there was an incident that they could blow out of context, that was all fodder that they could use, so to speak, and raise funds, gain support. [In] the other states, in some instances, there had been more force, apparently, used by law enforcement than there should have been.

There was a variety of things that we could profit from. As far as the schools themselves were concerned, the question was whether or not everybody had been instructed how they should react in the event of an integrated institution. We found a number of instances where there were things that had not been done the way they should have been done. So we profited from that and succeeded in putting together a plan to see that the fellow got into Clemson College without a ripple. While it actually occurred very shortly after Fritz left office, I do know that there was no incident whatsoever when he was admitted to Clemson College.

Hartsook: Didn't you tell me that you even invited Governor-elect Russell to some of these planning meetings and that his son Donald, Jr., attended in his place?

Walker: One of the last things that Fritz did before leaving office, and after Russell had been elected, Fritz wanted to have a meeting with key persons involved in the plans for [the] peaceful integration of Clemson College. We met in Fritz's office. Fritz asked me to contact Governor Russell and invite him to attend so that he would be advised of and involved in the plans which had been implemented to see that Clemson College was peacefully integrated. I did. He declined to come personally, but he did send his son Donald Russell, Jr., who was going to take over my job as legal assistant. He was going to be his father's legal assistant in his office without pay, so that there'd be no question of impropriety as far as hiring a member of your own family. He and I talked about some of the aspects of a legal assistant's task in the Governor's office and we attended the meeting with Fritz. We had a good relationship and I enjoyed the time I spent with him. So yes, they were made aware of what plans..., and of course that was the way it should have been. And that's the way it was.

Hartsook: At that time, were the plans fairly detailed?
Walker: The plans were detailed to integrate and peacefully have Harvey Gantt become a student at Clemson University. Yes. They were detailed and implemented. This is sort of an aside, but there was a lengthy story in the *Saturday Evening Post* shortly after Clemson College was integrated, setting out in detail what had been done in terms of preparing everybody for that integration; the people at the college that worked with the students, Fritz, and others close to the legislature, had worked with the legislature and elements there that needed to be in step with the rest of the state, business people, a whole cross-section, everybody had pulled together. Well, I say everybody. The vast majority of people were of one accord. It was a matter that had been worked on long and hard in order to achieve that.

Hartsook: Now, when picking Harvey Gantt, did you take into account anything about his personal character and characteristics? Did you want somebody that you knew was level-headed, or was he strictly academically qualified, and you went ahead based on that?

Walker: This is going way back, but as well as I can recall, as far as I and Chief Strom were concerned, he was handled pretty much as you would handle any other applicant. Nobody was trying to find out whether or not Harvey Gantt might have some flaw in his character that could be used to say no, he should not be admitted. We tried to check him out as you would any other student who had applied for admission. I'm sure that the investigation probably entailed a little more in-depth study of him than it would of a normal student, but nobody was trying to put him under a microscope and try to find some reason to reject him.

[Tape 1, Side 2 ends. Tape 2 Begins]

Hartsook: I was thinking more of the rigors that Branch Rickey took to pick somebody who was of a nature to take all the abuse, and I was wondering if you had looked at that in picking Harvey Gantt, that he was so mature and ...

Walker: My recollection is that we did not. Of course, we had sense enough to know that if he had applied to Clemson, odds are that he sort of was hand-picked, if you know what I mean. We figured we were going to find he was qualified and if he was academically as well as in the other respects as you normally would look at the student, unless he had some real record of some such that
would say no, we were trying to go down the middle and handle him like you would anybody else, because we knew this is the way it ought to be done. I don't think we were actually trying to find somebody who was head and shoulders in terms of his stability like you're talking about with Jackie Robinson. It was unfortunate that Jackie Robinson was the one who got refused here. But I've heard a lot said back and forth about that episode. In the aftermath of it, I haven't heard a thing said about how the demonstration and protest of that was handled. And that was handled with all the dignity that it could be handled with, and as proper as you could ask for.

**Hartsook:** Now at the same time that these plans were being made to integrate Clemson, Governor Hollings was preparing what is probably one of the most famous speeches ever delivered on the floor of the General Assembly, his final address to the General Assembly, in which he basically challenges them [the legislature] to go forward with integration. Did you play any role in the drafting of that speech or his decision to make it? Because it seems to me that when you're leaving office, you leave that hot potato for your successor. Instead, he did something that was terribly courageous.

**Walker:** I had no direct role in that final address. It is consistent with Fritz's overall tenure as governor of this state. He had the interest of the people at heart. The positions he took, any of those I have any knowledge of, it wasn't for show; it wasn't for a matter of convenience. Fritz always appeared to me to act in the best interest of the state and the people of this state, and it would have been out of character for Fritz Hollings to have worked as hard and as diligently in that area if he had not followed through to the very end, which included addressing the General Assembly. It wouldn't have been Fritz Hollings if he had failed to do so. That's the way he was.
Hartsook: Were you in the chamber when he was making that address?

Walker: I can't recall whether I was actually in the chamber or not.

Hartsook: Do you recall the reaction?

Walker: I know what the reaction was, let's put it that way.

Hartsook: And how would you characterize that?

Walker: Mixed. You're dealing with a legislative body; it was a mixed reaction.

Hartsook: You make him sound like a very hands-on manager.

Walker: In what sense are you using the term "hands-on manager"?

Hartsook: It sounds like he made sure that everyone understood what the stance was going to be of the Hollings administration, that they carried that out.

Walker: I would say yes, very much so, in every area that I have enough knowledge to form an opinion about. He did. And he made it clear. Of course, by and large, I've always said you knew where Fritz Hollings stood. He wasn't a fence-straddler. He had his heart and soul in what he did. In my opinion, he was one of the New South Governors, at a difficult time and in advance of the term that was later coined for those who were progressive and with [a] far-reaching vision in the South. He had that back then.

Hartsook: I was very interested when we were talking earlier, one would tend to think that the legal assistant to the Governor of South Carolina would be a fairly safe, secure, peaceful job, but you were really out right in the thick of it. I wondered if you could tell a little about the danger that you witnessed. I think we take it for granted now that South Carolina was peaceful and yet I was very taken with your remark that, at the time, anything could have happened.
Walker: It was a very volatile situation. As I said, this is something that people had never been confronted with in this state. It was a peaceful movement, a nonviolent movement, but nobody knew whether or not it would remain nonviolent. And, as we know, it did in South Carolina subsequently escalate to a point where it was not nonviolent. Violence occurred on both sides. In other areas, there began to be evidence of violent movement emerging as far as the blacks were concerned. We had no way of knowing at that point in time whether or not the blacks would be nonviolent. And the numbers were not insignificant, there were large numbers. At the same time, you had a group of whites who invariably would congregate. We knew that some of those were people [who] either belonged to organizations that were segregationist and who had some history of violence, or that they were parts of groups that were suspect in terms of the depths of their feelings, who could become violent. We didn't know when violence would occur from either side. Things did get heated.

I initially found myself between a group of white angry citizens and young blacks who were sitting in at a restaurant. It looked like it was about to get out of hand. I looked around and I wasn't seeing enough agents to cover the situation. Luckily, things did remain nonviolent, tense but not out of hand. Pete Strom had already suggested that I ought to be wearing a side arm. I wasn't. I was commissioned as a law enforcement agent, I was a SLED agent, duly commissioned, so I was authorized to carry a fire arm. But I told him no, didn't need that. But after I encountered that incident, I said, “Chief Strom, I think I'd better have a little protection.” So I asked him to get me a blackjack, not a pistol. Then I got into another situation which was even more tense than that, and feelings were running high, and I subsequently told him, “Yep, better get me a pistol.” Fortunately, [I] did not have to ever use either of those, but it was a tense situation and it was one where violence could have erupted at any time.

When I went to work in the morning, I never knew where I was going to lay my head on a pillow that night, whether it [a possible disturbance] was going to be at one end of the state to the other. Generally speaking, if it was of any magnitude, Chief Strom and myself as well as other SLED agents were actually there. And, as a matter of fact, Pete Strom and I were usually at the very front of the entire incident.

Hartsook: And for something like that, would it be typical for you to drive there together in the same car from Columbia and discuss the strategy on the way down?
Walker: Yes and no. Sometimes we were together, but generally speaking, you had the wheels turning on your strategy before you left because you had to get hold of the proper forces if you knew what was going on on the other end. Lots of times, to begin with, we had advance notice. But then they got smart. They wouldn't let you know what was coming or when or where. So you had to rely on getting information from an informant, or being alerted as soon as it broke out. Sometimes we would travel together, sometimes he'd be busy doing what he was doing, or I'd be busy doing what I was doing. He'd be in his vehicle and I'd be in mine. Lots of times, we were together.

Chief Strom deserves a tremendous amount of credit also. Pete Strom was not only an excellent law enforcement officer but he was also an expert politician. He knew his people and he knew how to handle situations and how to get things done. He was an invaluable help. And as I said, I spent about as much time with him as I did with Fritz.

Hartsook: Was Chief Strom popular with the local law enforcement?

Walker: Yes, he was.

Hartsook: So, he wasn't seen as an outsider coming to take over, but as someone to help?

Walker: He was a fellow officer who was welcomed everywhere he went in this state. That also was enhanced by the fact that SLED agents were picked from all over the state and they, of course, in turn were respected in the various areas of the state. He worked very closely with the sheriffs, with the chiefs of police, and was on a first-name basis with most of the key personnel all over the state. He was welcomed with open arms wherever we went. At that time, there were only about forty SLED agents and a number of those were experts in various areas, and some of them were college graduates, a goodly number of them. It was an excellent, excellent organization. When Fritz came in the office, there was no wholesale change of members of SLED. I don't think there were but about three or four changes made by him. As a matter of fact, there was one agent he felt should be replaced. I had had some contact with him and I didn't know whether that should be done or not and Fritz was good enough to say, “Well, I'll hold off and give you a chance to see what you can tell me about him.” Unfortunately, I couldn't come up with enough. In other words, Fritz was right and I was wrong on him.
Hartsook: We often hear talk of the two groups that were most visibly opposing civil rights, the Klan and the white Citizens Councils. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about those two groups and compare and contrast them for me.

Walker: I wouldn't attempt to compare or contrast the two groups. The only thing that I would comment on is the fact that we, from the very beginning, were very much aware of the fact that we needed control in terms of the activities of both of those groups. I don't think there's any question that the Klan gave us greater concern. SLED, of course, had a network of informants. We knew what was going on as far as the Klan was concerned. We made it clear every time the opportunity presented itself that there would be no interference from the Klan. I can recall one of the most serious confrontations that I was involved in during the entire time that I was on Fritz's staff was when we confronted a Klan meeting in Columbia. That was a very tense situation but we prevailed. They decided that they would not go beyond what we told them was allowable and what was not permissible. When the meeting concluded, we followed the various ones [Klan members]. No incidents occurred. So it was made clear that the Klan was not, nor any other group, was going to interfere with the way we were handling that particular situation in this state. I'm glad to say that it didn't happen.

Hartsook: When you speak of the black leaders you most often hear of people like the Reverend Whitaker, Matthew Perry, [and] I. DeQuincey Newman. Senator Hollings wanted me to get you to speak particularly about a gentleman you mentioned earlier, the Reverend Ivory [of Rock Hill]. What can you tell me about him? I have not heard that name before.

Walker: I could elaborate but it would be somewhat redundant. Reverend Ivory was a very active leader. I. DeQuincey Newman was too, but I think they operated from different mindsets. You could depend on Reverend Ivory's hand to be involved anywhere in the state. He showed up at most of these demonstrations. No question those were the leaders, and they would push sometimes for disobedience to the point of almost getting out of the nonviolent mode, but not to the point where
they actually incited violence. If that tells you anything.

Speaking of Rock Hill, I remember there was an incident in Rock Hill where some young blacks had been arrested and sentenced. They were in a penal institution in Rock Hill, a county institution. A demonstration was planned, and I believe it was on a Sunday. [We] knew it was going to come, knew it was going to be a big one. Pete Strom and some of the others had called up ahead of time, and back and forth, and I had learned that they were putting barbed wire around the prison compound. I knew what would happen with that. The press would pick up on it, the news media. They'd make it look like a concentration camp. I went up to call Fritz, went up to the Mansion and sat down and talked with him and told him how I felt about the barbed wire. [We] didn't need it, in the first place. In the second place, [we] knew the media would make a field day out of it, make it look like, my Lord, we thought we were protecting folks, in a situation where it was not necessary. Fritz agreed with me. So the word went back up the line and the barbed wire was gone. That turned out to be a peaceful demonstration. The blacks who wanted to were allowed, six at a time, in to visit with the prisoners. Because, after all, it's a prison and you've got to have security both inside and out, so we kept them a suitable distance away but not unreasonable. We tried to handle the situation with as much deference as possible. I remember a Highway Patrolman coming up to me with a black man who said that he had gotten kicked. I wanted to find out if he could give us any assistance in apprehending who had kicked him because we'd sure go do it right then. But he couldn't. Then I wanted to know whether he was injured, because if he was, I would have the patrolman take him where he could receive treatment. But he said he wasn't injured. That's the way we tried to handle things.

Hartsook: In thinking back on the civil rights issues, were there any decisions that had to be made that you thought were particularly difficult, a fork in the road where it's hard to determine which way to go, and one where you and Hollings and others might have spent a good bit of time discussing the route you wanted to take? Historians tend to look back, and things seem to have this kind of inevitable progression, and yet we all know that's not really true at all.

Walker: I don't think that there were any real forks in the road as far as I can recall. There were, of course, situations that arose like I referred to – Greenville – where we needed to sit down with the City Council and other authorized officers and let them know what was going on and how things were being handled and that the Governor's office was actively involved. That's a kind of
fork in the road. You didn't have that situation with all the counties; you had it in a few of them. The lower part of the state sometimes might present a situation that was more volatile. You needed to know the right people to talk to, but you sit down and brainstorm on that. I don't recall any major forks. Fritz pretty well knew what he wanted and it was a matter of implementing it. It unfolded on both sides as things went along. Now, of course, I am sure that from Fritz's standpoint, in terms of the legislature and other influential groups in the state, there may have been some forks in the road which had to be confronted, but in terms of out there on the front line, so to speak, there were no real quote “forks in the road” that called for any real concentrated efforts in terms of devising which way to go.

Hartsook:  Before we leave civil rights, I'd like to ask you about an organization, the South Carolina Council on Human Relations and Alice Spearman [its long time executive director]. Did they play any significant role, to your recollection?

Walker:  Not to my recollection. If they did, it was a role which apparently did not impact on me and on what I was doing or what I was expected to do.

[Tape 2, Side 2 begins]

Walker:  ... Of course Fritz kidded about me having a pistol, “Well, you're going to shoot yourself.” I said, “Darn your time, you're the one who put me out there on the line,” and my wife didn't like that. She said she married a lawyer; she didn't marry a law enforcement officer.

Hartsook:  You weren't the only one out there. John West was threatened by the Klan and carried a gun for several years. Somebody told me that when they had the Orangeburg incident during Governor McNair's time that there were a number of members in the Senate chamber that were armed. I don't know whether the number was two or four, or twenty-four, but we wouldn't tend to think of that today.

Walker:  I wasn't going to get into that. We were called on to protect first one [legislator] and then another from time to time. Sol Blatt and his son were appearing somewhere and they had concerns about threats from the Klan and they wanted a little protection. Of course, we saw that
they were protected. Sol Blatt, Jr. wrote me a letter and expressed his appreciation. There were a few of those where we had to do that. There was a great deal of feelings.

Hartsook: Was it an exciting time when you think back on it, or a worrisome time?

Walker: When you look back on it, it was an exciting time. But at the time it was a tense, serious time. But if you look back on it, yeah it was exciting. But it was work.

Hartsook: What would a typical day, in an atypical job I know, but what kind of time would you get up, and what kind of time would you usually...?

Walker: I usually went to work at nine o'clock and usually worked until five, if there wasn't anything out of the ordinary. But, that five might stretch into..., break for supper, go home, see the wife and kids and back to the office. A good bit of night work. You never knew from day to day what was going to come up. Some of them would be routine, some of them not. Sometimes the office work would pile up. My God, I've seen the time when I've had not one, not two, but three secretaries going at one time. Katherine Dunlap, of course, she's the one that had been there with three, four other prior Governors. She knew the business of handling the appointments and preparing them and so forth inside out, so she did most of that. Then I'd drop over to another one with whatever else had to be done, and then, once I got that one loaded up, sometimes in all this hullabaloo things would stack up on you. I've had as many as three of them working at one time. Martha Payne was working in the office at that time. I heard you mention her a while back. The best way to say it is there was no typical day. You never knew what was going to come down, and where you went, and what you're going to be doing. I did get involved in some other things that he wanted me involved with. There was sort of a running feud as far as the penitentiary was concerned, and I was working with Colonel Manning and helping him.

Hartsook: What was the feud?

Walker: I can't remember. They were after Colonel Manning for something, the legislature was, and he appeared before the legislature. But I can't remember the details of that one. Things like that would come up. Of course, there were other places Fritz would want me to go here, go
there, somewhere else. It was a busy time.

Hartsook: What's your most striking memory of that period?

[Tape stops, then restarts]

Walker: I think my most striking memory of my four years as legal assistant to Fritz was the visit by John F. Kennedy to Columbia during the course of his campaign. First and foremost, I recall that his arrival was delayed, and Tom Daisely did a good job of keeping the crowd aroused until his arrival. When he arrived, on the way up to the top floor of the state capitol, before he came down the steps and proceeded to the podium to address the crowd.... As I said he was running late, and we went up in the elevator, and there were a number of people on the elevator, and they filed off. He said he was tired, could he just have a few moments in the elevator to compose himself. I said certainly. On the way in, somebody had given him a buckeye for good luck. He handed me that buckeye and asked me to keep it for him. He reached for his notes in his pocket and that's the way I left him until he was ready to leave the elevator and go down the hall for the reception. He never got his buckeye back. We never got a chance to give it back to him. I still have that buckeye. After his speech, I was greatly impressed by the fact that, if ever a man could whip a crowd into a frenzy, he could. When it came time to get that man back in the motorcade we literally had to lift him up over the heads of people; thought we'd never get him in the motorcade. We lost watches, rings, you name it, people just wanting to get to him. The crush of the crowd. [Automobile] dealers had allowed us to use a number of convertible automobiles. After that
motorcade left, the sides of those automobiles were caved in just like you'd gone down the line and hit them with a sledgehammer, just the force of bodies against them. He was a dynamic person and I expect that was one of the most, if not the most, memorable incidents that I recalled from my four years with the Governor.

Hartsook: What other people in public life had that kind of impact here in South Carolina? Hollings certainly has tremendous charisma.

Walker: I expect Fritz has about as much charisma as anybody else I know of. I don't know of anybody else in this state that has got that kind of charisma. We handled security on Eisenhower as we've already mentioned, on Richard Nixon, neither one of those had that kind of charisma or could whip a crowd up that way. I really don't know anybody else in South Carolina who has got that kind of charisma and could whip a crowd up like that.

Hartsook: What do you feel is Hollings’ chief legacy as governor?

Walker: Frankly, from my standpoint, I feel that his chief legacy lies in the dynamic way in which he sought to move the state forward in every way possible. His success is measured by the fact that so many of his initiatives have been built on and are still being built on. I feel that coupled with the fact that, as far as I'm concerned, he was a man who you knew where he stood and you knew what he stood for. He had a tremendous amount of integrity. As I told you earlier, when it came to the appointment of people to important positions, if he had any control over the appointment at all, what he sought to do is to appoint the individual who is best qualified for the position. It didn't matter whether that man had opposed him or whether that man had been with him. That's integrity. In other words, I don't think he played politics with the office. I think he was a man of stature. Of course, I can only speak to the four years when I'm close enough to him to know; he came as close to being a “statesman” as you could ask for. In my mind, that's his legacy as governor.

Hartsook: What do you think were your main contributions to that legacy?

Walker: I'd have to summarize that by saying: doing my job to the best of my ability
consistent with the sense of direction that I got from Fritz Hollings in terms of what he wanted and how he wanted it done. To that end, I think I gave him four of the best years of my life. I realized that I was hired to do a job, and I am proud of the fact that we did handle, during his administration, the civil rights issues the way that we did handle them, and I feel that that reflects credibly on Fritz as well as on the state as a whole. Because it took people to make it happen with a sense of direction during those four years.

**Hartsook:** January 1963, you're out of a job. What do you do?

**Walker:** Came back to Greenville to do what I love most, that is practice law. Fritz, of course, was glad to do anything he could to assist members of his staff as they left, but I wanted to come back and practice law. Came back and first was appointed to my old job with the city, prosecuting attorney. Along after that, the city recorder, the judge of the municipal court, died, and the city council saw fit to elect me as judge of the municipal court. I kept that position for a while, which was part time, and since then, I've devoted my time to the practice of law.

**Hartsook:** Has the law changed a great deal?

**Walker:** The law has changed tremendously.

**Hartsook:** Is it still fun?

**Walker:** Okay, I'm going to go ahead and say this. It is not as much fun as it used to be. I can recall, several years ago, Judge Frank Epps and I having a conversation, and him saying they're taking all the fun out of practicing law, and I agreed with him. But, it is still fun to this extent. I am now, of course, semi-retired, with limited vision because of Retinitis Pigmentosa, but I have excellent office help. I still go in to court occasionally. It is fun to this extent, I had a heart attack last June and after recovering from the heart attack discussions ensued between me and both my internist and my cardiologist. I was wanting to get back to work. I got back to work. Both of them wanted to know whether I was able to control the case load. Both of them were of the same opinion: go for it, work’s good for you, glad you enjoy it. So, I'm back at work with the blessings of them, and if it wasn't enough fun, I wouldn't be here. That's the best way I know to summarize it.
Hartsook: Now, in fifteen years or so when that handsome young lad in the photographs [obviously a grandson] behind you comes and says he's thinking of going to law school, would you encourage him to do that?

Walker: My oldest son is an attorney practicing in Columbia, Clay Walker; he's in partnership in Columbia. So yes I would.

Hartsook: What do you think is the one biggest change since you've been practicing?

Walker: In law?

Hartsook: Yes.

Walker: I would have to say the biggest change is twofold, and this is a broad statement. The substantive law in every area has been amplified and refined tremendously. At the same time, the procedural law has become more and more complex. So, you've got such a complex system now that it's impossible to be a general practitioner as I was through the years. You can't keep up with more than a limited number of fields of law and so you pretty well have to limit your practice to certain areas. I would say that that is the biggest change that has come about in the practice of law.

Hartsook: Have you stayed close to Senator Hollings?

Walker: Not especially so. He and I have been in touch from time to time, but as I said, I have not felt that he was obligated to me in any sense. He hired me to do a job; I tried to do it. I know that I've been told, and I know it's a fact, that if he can be of any assistance to me to please don't hesitate to contact him, but I have never attempted to encroach on that relationship. That's just the way I'm made.

Hartsook: You said you were not involved in politics before, have you pretty much continued that apolitical...?
Walker: That's right. Politics has no fascination for me.

Hartsook: Well you must be particularly proud of your friend Jim Mann though, because with all of the impeachment business [As we met, the Senate trial of President Clinton was underway] everyone is recalling the leading role he played in the House Judiciary Committee and how proud we all were of that quiet leadership.

Walker: Jim Mann is a brilliant man and a brilliant lawyer. I've known him very pleasantly over the years. If you want me to recount a little incident, Jim Mann and I were close to some of the people who were very active in the humane society. They had a banquet or convention here and they wanted Jim and me to put on a little skit for them. Of course, Jim stuck me with most of the work. We dug out of the statutes various laws dealing with inhumane treatment of animals and we did, oh, three or four little skits illustrating the law and the violations of it. We made a big hit with the humane society. So, I have some fond memories of Jim Mann.

Hartsook: He seems to be someone that marches very much to his own drummer.

Walker: That he does. That he does. When I first started practicing law, I was with the Love firm, and right across the hall from the Love firm was the Mann firm. We were in pretty close contact over an extended period of time with our offices being right across the hall from each other.

Hartsook: Well I'm about done. Is there anything that you would like to add to the record that I have not brought up?

Walker: Not that I know of. Of course you know who the Kennedys were calling on, to help with the other southern governors in this civil rights business? They were calling on Fritz. And Fritz was a go-between with the other southern governors. So you know how level-headed that was. But don't get into that.

[Interview Ends]