

Governor McNair Oral History Project
South Carolina Department of Archives and History

Interview

with

Robert E. McNair

Interviewer:

Cole Blease Graham

Date:

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CBG: This is Tape 2, Side 1, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair. This is the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. My name is Blease Graham, and today's date is April 28, 1982. Governor McNair, we've been talking about your time at [the University of South] Carolina and in military service. Can you tell us what was it like, in terms of your personal life, as a student on the Carolina campus? Do you recall some of your friends and the groups with which you were affiliated perhaps?

REM: I think we have talked about coming from the rural area, from Berkeley County, and going to Clemson like everybody else did and then transferring down to the university. That in itself was a real experience because Clemson wasn't quite the transition that coming to Carolina was at that time. Carolina was a more socially-oriented school, and larger; and getting into it was totally different--you know, just the introduction to the university. Fortunately, I had participated in high school athletics and had played some freshman basketball at Clemson, so coming down to Carolina, I got into athletics. I went out for the basketball team, made it, had to lay out a year, and had an opportunity to really get involved in campus life, intramural sports and all, while I was waiting to become eligible the following year.

Because of my high school superintendent, Henry White, and his having graduated from the university and knowing a lot of people, I was rushed by fraternities. I got into Kappa Sigma, and that was an introduction to a new life, the fraternity life on the campus. It was good, though, because I had not had the opportunity for the kind of social experiences that you were exposed to at Carolina, and being in a fraternity was a very, very valuable thing for me. The people there at that time were interested in you not just for the social side but for the academic side as well. They put a lot of emphasis on that and watched us very closely to see that we kept up in our school work and all. People that I got to know in a hurry were folks like Tom McCutchen, who's a prominent lawyer here in town and was in the same fraternity, George Coleman, who's now a circuit judge, [McLeod] Mac Singletary, who's my partner in the law firm, and Sol Blatt, Jr., who is now a federal judge and the son of Speaker [Solomon] Blatt. My roommate at the university went on to Annapolis during the war and graduated, Jim Chapman, who is now retired and living in the Myrtle Beach area, Robert Harper, who's a doctor down at Andrews right across the river from where I grew up, you know, many, many others, but those were primarily the group of close friends that most of my time was spent with.

CBG: What was a typical day like as a Carolina student?

REM: Probably not a lot different than it is now. You spent your time in early mornings in classes and the afternoons, depending on the time of the year, studying usually and then again at night. There was a good bit of social activity, so many social events going on. So you had to first learn how to discipline yourself. You

know, having grown up in the country in a rather sheltered atmosphere and coming off to school where you had to make your own decisions, you had to determine to get up and be at class at eight o'clock. You had to set aside time to study. That was difficult. I was fortunate to get involved in a lot of the extra-curricular activities in addition to athletics.

CBG: Did you continue your debating at all?

REM: Only to a very limited extent. I affiliated with the Euphratian Literary Society. We had two on the campus, the Clariosophic and the Euphratian. I affiliated with that, but did very little because I didn't have time when I first came to the university. I devoted most of my time the first year, the first two years really, to being involved in the athletic program and to going to school. I had a bad leg that I had hurt in high school, and after a year I finally just gave it up totally because it was one of those cartilage problems that would slip out and lock on you, and you were out for a week or two, and then it took you weeks to get back.

CBG: Yes. As a member of a college in which there, I suppose, was some evidence of co-educational policies, did you find that a big contrast with Clemson?

REM: Yes. Because the university was the school with the girls at that time. That was another thing you had to learn to discipline yourself. They were there, but it was, you know, back to where you were in high school, going to classes with them and seeing them, except you could go out every night if you wanted to. Fortunately, there were some good restrictions on the girls. None on us. But they had to be in at a certain hour, and they had to sign out, sign in, and they could only go out certain times. If they were behind in their school work, then they weren't allowed to sign out except on weekends. So that, I think, was a very good thing for all of us, the restrictions on them.

CBG: Did you find yourself taking a variety of these new coeds to all kinds of events?

REM: Well, to start with, yes. I think, like most, we sort of looked the field over while they looked us over. Back then, you know, you dated around; you didn't go steady until you were ready to go steady.

CBG: It really was kind of encouraged, wasn't it, by the policies.

REM: It was encouraged by the policies. You went to a dance, and even if you took a date, you danced or tried to dance with numbers of people there. It was a courtesy thing and the custom to do that, not like it is

today or was a few years ago where you took one girl, you danced with her all night, and you went with one person and didn't date around the campus. Yes, we did. And also outside. Converse [College] was quite the place during that time, and the Converse girls all liked to come down to the university for the weekends. So the older fraternity members were always looking for some of us younger fellows to date friends of their girlfriends from Converse or someplace like that. Columbia College was here, and at that time there were more boys on campus than there were girls, so, you know, you went out looking also. We didn't have good transportation, so the girls had to come see us. We didn't have too many opportunities to get up to Spartanburg.

CBG: Yes.

REM: We could get out to Columbia College occasionally.

CBG: Did these events take shape so that, as you began to anticipate finishing the university, you were thinking about marriage?

REM: No, not really. Then, you finished your education first and talked about marriage later. All of us had our college love affairs along the way, of course, just as people do now.

CBG: Right.

REM: Most of us, though, were concentrating on getting out of school and then getting married. The war came along and changed that. That caused a lot of people, I think, to move ahead in their plans along that line. I know we did. I had dated around and then had started dating Josephine [Robinson], who was an Alpha Delta Pi from Allendale. We had gone steady for a long period of time, and then like others had broken up, and then we started back again. When I discovered that I was going overseas and not going to have a length of time here in the country, we then talked about it and made a quick decision to go ahead and get married. That's why we were married on the West Coast rather than here in South Carolina.

CBG: Was this an event that a lot of family participated in?

REM: We didn't have time. This was one of those things that we decided rather quickly. I was on my way to California to go to the South Pacific, so she had to make a quick decision to come out there where we were married, and no family participated. My friends that I had made in the navy were the principals in the

wedding. Her mother was very upset because this was the last semester of her senior year and about two weeks before exams. So she had to go through a very quick and rushed petition to all the faculty members to take her exams late or to exempt exams in order to come to California for us to be married. Unfortunately for us, we were married only ten days before I left to go overseas. So she was able to return in time to graduate with her class rather than miss it and have to go through it later. That made her mother happy and her family because of the investment they had.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I don't think I was too popular for awhile.

CBG: As you look back on it, do you think the onset of the war made things a lot more serious for a young person and a young couple? Were there pressures that were perhaps more acute or at least different from the pressures that young couples feel today?

REM: We look back and say we grew up in a hurry. We had to. We matured almost over night because we were confronted with decisions that were affecting--we thought and really did affect--our lives and our futures. Just like that. Going through a marriage without waiting and not knowing what might happen to either one of us--so many people did that--and then getting into the service. Getting into combat areas, and getting responsibilities, you know, made mature men out of us overnight. The college boy became a very mature person because not only his life, but quite often for us we the lives of other people were dependent on the decisions we would make. That makes you stop and think and makes you mature.

CBG: While Allendale is perhaps a little further into civilization than Jamestown, it was an act of courage for Mrs. McNair to travel to California to get married, wouldn't you think?

REM: It was a real thing for her to do because she sat out all alone and by herself and wasn't sure I would be there when she got there. We were on standby, awaiting transportation. They had a list of everybody's name down at the port of embarkation, and we reported in every morning and looked up at a board to see if our name was pegged. If it was, we went in and inquired about our ship assignment. If it wasn't, we'd leave and we were free until the next day. Fortunately, one of my very close friends, Beecher Morton, who's now superintendent of schools down in Aiken and at Rhems, South Carolina, Dr. Morton had finished Furman and was in the same group, and he was assigned to the port of embarkation on temporary duty and was the one who pegged names. Knowing what I was planning to do and knowing that he was going to be the best

man, he wouldn't peg my name until Josephine arrived. We were sort of the last group to go. That gave us an opportunity to have about ten days together in San Francisco.

CBG: Were you able to keep good communications with Mrs. McNair while you were overseas?

REM: No, no. That was something during that time that was only by letter. We moved so much, and it was all mostly secretive where we were. It was all sent to that APO number, and we got the mail whenever we got in some civilized port. In the amphibious forces, we were normally up front, sort of, wherever there was going to be or had been an invasion of another island, and only when we'd complete that and come back to one of the ports that had been there for a long time would we get our mail, and that would be, you know, numbers and numbers of letters at one time. She knew very little about where we were except occasionally she'd figure it out from my letters, see. Everything was censored. We had to censor all of the mail going out from our own crews, and then ours was censored also. Because of that you knew not to put anything in there that would reveal where you were, but you could occasionally talk about, say, the San Fernando Valley. That's in California . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . but also over there, and she would identify and think, "Well, he's in that area because he made reference to something like that.

CBG: Yes.

REM: It was more difficult for her and all the wives than it was on us. We knew where we were, and we knew that we were safe most of the time, but they didn't, and they were constantly living under fear that they were going to get that telegram.

CBG: I suppose reading newspaper accounts and *Life* magazine and listening to radio just heightened that anxiety a lot of times.

REM: You know, the papers dramatized it, and it was a lot worse back here although it was rough over there. It was, you know, a day at a time or something like that, and the rest of the time we were relatively safe, or at least we thought so.

CBG: Yes. What was it like coming back to the United States?

REM: Well, that was an exciting time for all of us because we'd been there long enough. Where in, what we call, the regular navy, they would come into port occasionally and have a chance to visit because their wife or their family could join them for a few days, we didn't have that opportunity. In the amphibians when we left, we stayed. Before they started the big move, they had a policy of letting the amphibious people come to Australia or somewhere for an R & R [rest and recreation] for a short time. They abandoned all of that when we got there, so for nearly two years we really didn't get anywhere or see anybody except friends on the big ships we'd run into. Occasionally, somebody that we'd known who was on a carrier or a battleship or a destroyer would give us news of what was going on back home, and we'd visit with them. Other than that we were just with the group we were with and going from one island or group of islands to another and not really knowing a whole lot about what was happening outside. We didn't get the newspapers. We didn't have communications equipment on board. We had radios and occasionally we'd listen in on the shortwave to news from home and what was going on. We'd listen to Tokyo Rose as much as we did [chuckles] to news back home. Once in a while we could pick up something like a professional football game on the shortwave radio. That was a big event.

CBG: Yes. It was before a lot of the keeping-in-touch kinds of services that I guess the armed forces have today. Did you notice many changes as you began to reestablish yourself?

REM: Well, we came home with the mass of service people who were coming home and all trying to get resettled back in school or in work or whatever. That was a big thing. Schools and colleges all just grew so rapidly with the national student program where we could come back and go so long for each year we'd served on active duty. All of us then had the opportunity to come back to school at the government's expense. I did like most, came back, completed the undergraduate work and went on to law school. So not only your colleges, but universities and graduate schools, just had tremendous growth, and we were among that huge crowd of returning veterans looking for things to do, places to go.

CBG: Was there a noticeable growth in the size of the university as you came back?

REM: Well, the university grew tremendously just before we left. It was one of the schools that had the navy programs and the air force programs, so it almost doubled overnight as those who were in the various reserve programs were taken into active duty. The university was one of those places where they all came. We had the navy program, a rather large one, both V-7's and V-12's, the air force program, and all of that.

Coming back again, yes, there was a big change in the university, mainly because all of us coming back were mature. We'd been through the war, and there we were with all the young college kids, you know, the ones coming right out of high school, so we had two groups on the campus for the first time, the veterans and the non-veterans, and we weren't as interested in being the normal college student as they were, and we didn't participate in the kinds of things that we had previously. We were there to get an education, to get out, and get a job. It was a serious thing with us.

CBG: Did Mrs. McNair meet you at the point of discharge and travel back across the country?

REM: No. Transportation then was difficult. Everybody was coming, so all the means of transportation were overflowing. You couldn't fly. We didn't have the opportunity to fly back and forth as you do now. There was limited commercial air traffic and very limited military traffic, and only in emergencies could you get on a military flight coming back from overseas or coming from the West Coast to the East Coast. So we rode the train. That was the main means of transportation. She met me in Atlanta, and we spent a few days there getting reacquainted and then came straight on home to our parents because we were quite anxious to get back to them. Mine were older, and with me being an only child, they had lived through a pretty rough time. They were quite anxious, naturally, to see me. Josephine had done a good job of spending her time with both families. Both of us are only children, so she sort of split her time and spent a lot of time with my folks and tried to comfort them with the fact that everything was all right. We'd all be back home.

CBG: Did you all establish a home in Columbia then when you came back to school?

REM: Yes, we came back and like everybody else lived in an apartment. We lived in one on lower Main [Street] for a while and then on South Pickens [Street] through law school. We were all anxious to get through. The school had accelerated its program to where it was year round, three semesters during the year, and we completed our law work in two years instead of the normal three. That was really for the benefit of those of us who'd come home and were anxious to get through and get out. We started our family then, not by plan. We had our first child while we were in law school, and that jolted us because she was working and that income meant a lot to us. So we were quite anxious to get through and get out and get established.

CBG: Did you establish a new group of friends in law school, or did you find many of the same people . . .

REM: It was mostly the same group that had come back, the ones we'd known before and had gone to the university with. In law school, of course, you had people from all the other schools in the state, it being the

only law school. So we made a lot of new friends, of course, with folks who'd gone to Clemson undergraduate or to Furman or to Wofford or someplace like that. That was a new group. Basically, though, it was also people that we had known through our college days. In law school, in my class coming back were people like John West and [Ernest F.] Fritz Hollings, and Jim Mann, who had gone to undergraduate school at The Citadel and had come back to law school. So those we had not known before.

CBG: About how large was the law class in those days?

REM: Well, that was the overflow crowd.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Because so many people, because of the availability of the veteran's educational assistance, could go to law school and had determined they wanted to go to graduate school, you know, after they had that experience in the service, the school was overflowing. We were in the old building that was three times removed from where the law school is now.

CBG: Petigru.

REM: That's right, in Petigru, and we all went through there when it was completely overcrowded. It was our group coming out of law school that ran for the legislature and got elected that started the movement to build a new law school which was later constructed to take care of something like three hundred or more students. Most people thought that was about all we would ever have, and they outgrew that and are now in the new law center. I think we had the largest class. I have no idea now what it was, but probably sixty or a hundred in the graduating class, perhaps. Normally the law classes had been in the twenties and thirties before the war.

CBG: Is there a faculty member or members who stand out in your mind from that time?

REM: Well, we went through old Dean Frierson, who a lot has been written about and had been dean of the law school for a long, long time. Faculty members, Coleman Karesh, that everybody who went through school at that time singled out. He was a brilliant fellow who taught wills and trusts and had been invited to just about every prominent law school in this country. He always declined the invitations because he had a love for South Carolina and wanted to stay and contribute here. He probably had more influence on all of us

than most of the others on the faculty. The faculty was small with not too many full-time faculty members. Quite a number were lawyers who practiced and taught. Tally Elliott, of course, had become a full-time professor in criminal law. Carlisle Roberts, who was with the Jennings, Roberts law firm here in town, taught. Croft Jennings, who had been a navy officer and was a tax lawyer, taught taxation. Arthur Williams, who is retiring as chairman of the board of South Carolina Electric & Gas, taught labor law. He was then chief counsel for the electric and gas company. Dr. Elliott, who taught property law, was one of the distinguished constitutional and property lawyers in the whole South. He is one that we all remember very fondly. But it was different then than it is now. We felt we got a good education. We got a more practical education than they get now because we were taught by practicing attorneys, and they taught you how to practice as well as the theory part.

END OF SIDE ONE; BEGINNING SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 2, Side 2, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair as a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the Department of Archives and History. Today's date is April 28, 1982. Governor McNair, while a law student, were you able to supplement your education by working part-time, or with this accelerated curriculum was it all classroom work?

REM: Well, it was pretty concentrated, going to school continuously. At the same time, most of us had married and had a family, and either our wives worked or we worked or both. Josephine worked for doctors here in town, and I worked over at the Statehouse like so many do now for, you know, so many hours a day. We all had to supplement it, particularly when the children started coming along, and many of us had that same experience. So we had to work as much as we could to supplement the income.

CBG: As you look back on it, was it a comfortable period? It may not have been very affluent by contemporary standards.

REM: Well, I think it was. We enjoyed it. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We were all on about the same level, and we studied together and socialized together. It didn't take a whole lot for us to be happy. We would get together on a regular basis with our wives one night a week. I think it made it easier for them because we really studied. We spent most of our time in the library and it was tough on them not being involved. And during the summers we'd get as many as six or eight couples and get a house or two adjoining down at Edisto Beach or somewhere like that and spend that week's break we would get. So it was a very intense period as far as study and work.

CBG: Could you keep contact with family with new grandchildren coming along?

REM: Oh, yes. Our family's always been extremely close, and, as I said, both of us being only children, we spent an awful lot of time on the road because about every weekend we had to go to one or the other of the grand parents. We did it for other reasons, too. They helped us through, and we got an awful lot of groceries from them particularly down at my family's in the country. We'd go visit and come back loaded down with stuff. Yes, it was a time when you had to keep time for them, and they always looked forward to seeing the grandson. That was the highlight of their life, having him come along.

CBG: What went through your mind as you saw your law school period coming to an end? Did you think about varieties of law practice?

REM: Well, you didn't think about it then. You practiced law. You know, not many people thought about being a criminal lawyer, and nobody thought about being a tax lawyer or being a securities lawyer or any specialty. You went out and did whatever came along. People walked in the door with a problem, and if you couldn't answer it, you went to the books and looked for the answer. That's the difference between then and now. All of us were looking forward to getting out, and all of us were concerned about it. Then, most people went out and opened an office on their own. It wasn't like it is now where you law clerked and so many people go into law firms or into the government or into business. There just wasn't that kind of market for law graduates at that time. So we were all looking forward to going back home and practicing law. I was fortunate in that we'd been very close friends with a lawyer in Moncks Corner who was Speaker pro tem of the House of Representatives at that time. Through friendship with my father he had let it be known he wanted me to come back and practice with him. So I had a place to go and went back to Moncks Corner to practice with Marion Winter at that time.

CBG: Yes. How did you find beginning to take part in a law practice? Did you get a variety of cases?

REM: Well, it was a new experience and, yes, we had a very general practice. Fortunately, he had a heavy real estate practice, so I spent about 90 per cent of my time at the courthouse searching the records and closing loans. Also, I did a variety of things from, you know, defending somebody in the magistrate's court to helping him in a criminal case, to helping him defend the railroad in a crossing collision, just about anything that came along.

CBG: How did politics get into all of this?

REM: Well, I had, as I said, sort of grown up with an interest in it from my father, and while I was in law school, like so many returning veterans, I was persuaded to run for the legislature. Unlike many, I didn't drop out of school and campaign because I wanted to get through. I ran in Berkeley County while I was in law school and lost in a very, very, close race, and that had an influence on my future also. Had I won, I probably would have lived on and stayed on there. Losing that race left it open for me to later move to Allendale when the opportunity came for that.

CBG: Did losing a race like that come as a shock, or did you see this as part of the usual initiation of a young political hopeful?

REM: Well, looking back, it was a shock. I think I felt, as most people seemed to indicate at that time, that I might win, coming home from the war, being a veteran. That was, you know, the thing to do, and people were inclined to vote for the veteran. I got caught up in my first introduction to real politics in that race and went from where I thought I was going to win--even at eleven o'clock that night, I thought I had enough votes to win--when the final returns were in, I had lost. That was sort of a shock and did have some influence on my decision to later move to Allendale.

CBG: Was that race a county-wide race?

REM: Yes. That was. Then we had so many representatives from each county based on the number of people. Historically, South Carolina had always reapportioned the House every ten years. The Senate then was one senator from each county just like the United States is set up with so many congressmen from each state. There were so many representatives from each county.

CBG: Speaking about real politics, a lot of people heard about Berkeley County politics, particularly the Hell Hole Swamp approach to politics. Is there such a thing?

REM: Well, there was in that time. I had grown up when Berkeley County politics was and had always been a very serious thing with people. It was then. My father had been active. That was during the time that Senator [Rembert] Dennis was a just a young fellow. His father was the senator who was shot and killed down on Main Street in Moncks Corner, and that was over all kinds of internal political problems.

CBG: Yes.

REM: That created a terrible dilemma, so that he came along later, ran and was elected to the House. When I ran, he was running for the Senate against Marion Winter, and I was in law school--not associated with Mr. Winter at that time--running for the House. Senator Dennis's team won, and Mr. Winters lost. Mike Newell, who later became a colonel in the air force and who had flown during the war, ran with me, and he lost, too. So, he came out of law school, went back into service, and then was in the Pentagon for a number of years until he retired and came back to Moncks Corner.

CBG: If you think about politics in terms of factions, do you think Berkeley County may approximate that classic model that explains factions on the basis of geography with the intervening swamps or rivers or . . .

REM: Well, politics was serious, and it had its factions. It had the Dennis faction which had historically been there and then the Murray faction, Senator Murray who was then in the Senate. He's the one that the current Senator Dennis defeated. My father had always been aligned with the Murray group, and thus when I ran, we ran at odds with the current Senator Dennis. We are now very warm friends, personal friends, political friends, and we support each other very strongly. When I came along, we were on opposite political sides and almost political enemies. They say politics brings people together; and people in Berkeley County talk about politics making strange bedfellows, which we all say, and that's true. But as an outgrowth of all of that we became very good friends. His brother and I used to thumb rides back and forth from the university to home together when we were in school. This is Markley Dennis, who's now chairman of the board of trustees at the university. Markley was older by a year or more. He was in law school when I was in undergraduate school, and we'd thumb rides back and forth. If one had a ride, we'd always give the other one a ride. So we were all friends. His younger brother, Dr. [William] Dennis, who's now here with the Medical University in Columbia, was at the Medical University in Charleston. Billy was my contemporary. He was in high school at the same time. We had competed against each other. We competed against each other in oratorical contests. He was at Moncks Corner. I was out at Macedonia. So we were always friends, but in different political factions.

CBG: Did the factions have a particular interest, such as, say, agriculture?

REM: Not at the local level.

CBG: I see.

REM: No, it didn't get into emphasis on agriculture, schools, or roads. It was just pure politics.

CBG: Just the affinity groups.

REM: Families, you know, will align with different factions going way back and always sort of staying. That alignment holds right on. Berkeley's changed like everything else . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . from what you were just talking to with Moncks Corner and then the rural area, and it didn't follow a pattern there even because all the candidates were normally from Moncks Corner. It was unusual for a candidate to be from one of the rural communities. Thus, it was more a personal type of thing or a family association through the years or had been a part of that political clan or faction for forever. The changes came with the growth of the Berkeley County area near Charleston, the Hanahan/Goose Creek area that was very sparsely settled back in our time, and is now heavily populated. They do have the geographical differences now. That group, a very strong political group, support people from their area, and Moncks Corner and the others support people from their areas. So it's been very difficult on those like Senator Dennis and those that are there now. They've had to work very hard to keep the thing together and to keep the county together, to keep it from dividing up on a geographical basis.

CBG: It must have been quite an achievement for your dad to come into an area with all these linkages and find as active a place in politics as he did.

REM: Well, you know, the people in that area were very few, and in that time, see, only the whites voted. So there weren't large numbers, and everybody was sort of aligned by family. Thus, there were a lot of other people out there that were influenced or could be influenced, and that's where he got very active. As I said, earlier, he and my mother took such an interest in people in the area and taking care of them and seeing that, you know, they got to the doctors and all that when the time came, when politics came around, he had a lot of pretty strong influence on them.

CBG: Did he give you some political advice that . . .

REM: Oh, he did quite often, particularly during that time. Surprising to everybody, he was very supportive of my going to Allendale. He felt it was the best thing for me. He thought if I stayed in Berkeley, I'd be caught up in a continuation of the political factionalism. I had been drawn into the opposite group from Senator Dennis, though Rembert, the current senator, and my father had become friends. He had acknowledged that he was doing a good job and was not playing the factional role in dealing with areas and people in the various communities and became very fond of him and friendly with him in later years. He thought it best for my own future to move out and get out of that. So he encouraged me when the opportunity came to go to Allendale. Everybody couldn't understand that. They knew how he felt about my staying in Berkeley County, my roots were there, and he had such a strong interest in the county. People felt that he would be very upset with me for moving.

CBG: Did you initiate the idea of moving to Allendale?

REM: No. We, continued to visit back and forth, and it came from a group of the business people in Allendale. Allendale was the newest county in the state. It had been cut off from Barnwell in 1913, which was a long time ago, but had never really gained its own identity. Judge J. Henry Johnson was the first senator, old Mr. Bob [R. P.] Searson that you read a lot about and all were there, but it had sort of been dominated by Senator [Edgar] Brown and Mr. [Solomon] Blatt. Allendale, having been cut out from Barnwell, was still sort of the bump on the log, so to speak, in most people's minds. The lawyers were all in Barnwell and Hampton. Allendale had Judge Johnson's brother, who just did real estate title work and refused to even go into court. He never went into court in his lifetime. And old Mr. Tom Boulware, who was from Barnwell and practiced with Senator Brown, moved to Allendale, but had a terrible health problem. Young George Warren, whose father was old Senator George Warren that was quite noted and very famous from Hampton, people like that never got a foothold, never got established, didn't have an Allendale identity, and business people kept talking with me as we would visit Allendale. "Why don't you consider coming to Allendale and opening a law practice down here? We'll support you. We need somebody young and not identified with Barnwell or Hampton." So after going through about a year of thinking about it, weighing it, thinking of the political side in Berkeley and with the encouragement of my family and certainly Josephine's family, we decided to do it. So we moved to Allendale about a year after I'd started practicing in Moncks Corner.

CBG: What did you find when you moved there?

REM: Well, I found probably the friendliest, warmest group of people we've ever run into. I continue to say never have we had a more pleasant life than we had in Allendale. We had a battle and a difficult time because everybody had been so accustomed to going to Barnwell or Hampton when they had a major legal problem that it took a while longer than I hoped for, but not as long as probably I expected, to get established. We were lucky. We got good support from the business people. We went through several years of pretty lean living. I made a lot less than the 150 dollars a month that I had been making in Moncks Corner in Allendale. But my father helped us. He gave me a continued allowance as he had done through law school and helped me in Moncks Corner. He continued that on in Allendale until, you know, we felt we could get along without it. So we were very fortunate. We got into some good things in Allendale. Mr. Tom Boulware took me under his wing. With his health problem, which was emphysema, we had a terrible time in the courtroom and all. So he took me in tow almost immediately and brought me in to work with him on some stuff he had, and that was extremely helpful. We were lucky enough to get some good breaks and to get some decent lawsuits, as we call them, to be reasonably successful. So then I ran for the House after I'd been in Allendale only one year. I found out that's what they were really looking for, and they encouraged me--the same group--to run, so I ran for the House. I ran against a very prominent and well-known fellow, who was the general manager of the electric cooperative, and won and then stayed on continuously from then until I ran for lieutenant governor.

CBG: In terms of the law practice were you a solo?

REM: Yes, I opened an office in Allendale. I had a very good friend that we had been very close to in law school, almost like a brother, Vernon Sumwalt, the nephew of old Dr. Sumwalt, who was dean of the engineering school when we were there and then president of the university. Vernon was practicing down in Hampton with Buster Murdoch, who was the solicitor and lived with us in Allendale, paid board fifty dollars a month, and that was our subsistence allowance, we called it, and our practice started out by myself. So then Tom Lawton, who was from Allendale and had gone to Duke and Duke Law School, had started practicing in Georgetown because he liked Georgetown. When I ran for the legislature I discovered I couldn't campaign and carry on a law practice. So he came home and helped me in the office on a temporary basis, just part-time, and that worked out quite well. I got elected and soon discovered that there was no way I could make a living being in Columbia two-thirds of the time for half the year, and so I asked Tom about coming on to Allendale and practicing with me. He did, and that was a fortunate thing because he was from there, very bright, and a very thorough-type of person who was awfully good to have in the office, to do the office work and the kinds of things I never had time to do because I was always on the run. We complimented each other. Tom was very interested in the office practice, and I was interested in the outside

work and the litigation and the trial work. So we practiced together almost from the beginning of my Allendale time.

CBG: Did you establish your own office outside your house?

REM: Oh, yes.

CBG: The first time.

REM: Yes.

CBG: Was that . . .

REM: You have to do that. I started one, and I determined I was going to make it work. So I went to the office every morning, and I stayed there all day. It was awfully difficult sometime when the telephone wouldn't ring and nobody would walk in, but others have tried it the other way, and you never could find them when they needed them. I decided I was going to do it the hard way. Josephine helped me because she was a secretary. She graduated in secretarial science from the university. She helped me to start with. We soon discovered that that wasn't a good idea.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I had seen it in Moncks Corner where Mrs. Winter was a paralegal-- one of the few in that time--she was as good a lawyer as he was almost but didn't have a law degree, very good in tax work, but I had decided that, you know, it really wasn't a good thing to have the wife in the office, and as soon as I could afford it-- and we had one child and then a second-- Josephine didn't have the time--I started getting a part-time high school girl to come in after school and then on, as soon as we could, into somebody full-time to answer the telephone at least.

CBG: Did you in making your initial investment go slow and make a lot of your own furniture and things?
[chuckles]

REM: Oh, gosh, very slow. We used Josephine's portable typewriter that she had had in school for a long, long time, and I bought a desk from Vernon Sumwalt that he had had. Josephine's family were in the dry

cleaning and funeral business, and Mr. Robinson had a set of old antique living room-type furniture that he loaned me, and I used that. So I doubt if I had a hundred dollars invested in the office. We couldn't afford it.

CBG: Were the Robinson's proud of their son-in-law and this business?

REM: I think so. Mr. Robinson was on the city council and was the funeral director, and that was probably the thing that got me started. He knew everybody. Everybody knew him. He had buried somebody out of every home in the county, so people knew Bill Robinson's son-in-law. They probably didn't know my name, but, you know, they would refer to that, and that's where I think I got introduced to a lot of business and certainly where I got introduced to politics. I said I ran because I wanted my own identity. People just kept introducing me as Bill's son-in-law, and as I ran, I got an awful lot of votes because people were just voting for Bill Robinson's son-in-law. He was one of the finest, most accommodating people, and everybody just loved him. He had that way about him and was always doing things for people. Any of the old widow ladies around town that had a problem, they'd call him.

CBG: Yes.

REM: And he'd help them, or people out in the country, having known him through his funeral business, if they had a problem, they'd go to him. So it made it really a very good relationship.

CBG: What about your campaign? Was this one in which in the small community to personally meet and shake hands with . . .

REM: You went from door to door out in the rural areas and in the towns. I don't think I missed a single house or a single person that was a voter at that time. We didn't have what we call registered voters and all of that then. You had the voting list and the poll list, but we didn't have voter registration and all of that during that particular time that functioned as it does now. But, yes, it was door-to-door, handshaking, sit and talk with a lot of people, others just say hello and tell them who you were and what you were doing, and that was about it.

CBG: Did you make any speeches to gatherings?

REM: I made some. They had speakings back then, you know, at the state level. The state campaign went to every county. Then they had meetings in every precinct, and I think that was to my advantage as a young

fellow, a young lawyer, with a background and experience and all in that area. It was very helpful because Allendale had, as I said, not had real strong representation.

CBG: Yes. Did you find the same factions in Allendale that you had seen in . . .

REM: There was. When I got there, there were two very, very strong distinct factions, the Martin Thomas faction--he owned the Coca-Cola Company, a very fine businessman--and the Ed Myrick faction. He was a big farmer and grain dealer. They had swapped about every four years in the Senate, and Allendale had had a history of never leaving anybody there for any length of time. So there never really got to be a strong influence, and I came along and made friends with both and crossed the factional line and continued to cross over it pretty well though Ed Myrick and I served together. By working together real well he was then reelected for a number of times in the Senate, and we worked and got along extremely well. His son, who is a lawyer in Allendale now, had gone to Clemson, came back and went to law school and went into JAG [the Judge Advocate General's Corps] and came home and practiced with us and was the third member of the firm when I left. He hadn't been there too long when I was elected lieutenant governor.

CBG: Yes.

REM: That factionalism continued on, really, until my time as lieutenant governor was over. Martin Thomas, the senator, died. Dick William, who was a senator, put on a very unusual race in Allendale County where there was one or five vote's difference that had to be settled by vote in the Senate. He succeeded Martin Thomas and sort of became the head of that faction.

END OF SIDE TWO