

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 30, Side 1, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair as a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is October 11, 1983. Governor, thinking back over the experience of being the most visible public official in South Carolina, what is the daily life of the governor like? What goes on when one gets to be governor in South Carolina?

REM: Well, you have to realize that you suddenly become the chief executive officer that everybody looks up to as being the governor, the decision maker, and you have the responsibility of providing leadership, broad leadership. Secondly, you are the ceremonial head of the state, and you have a responsibility to visiting dignitaries, to speaking at many of the major functions, to traveling as a representative of the state. Then thirdly, you are the administrative head of state government, and that's one that I suppose a lot of people overlook. Government doesn't just happen and doesn't just work as a matter of course. If you're going to really accomplish anything, that third one has to have thought and attention, particularly in South Carolina where we have a board and commission system.

So you really find yourself almost playing three roles. As I used to say, you really needed to be three people. You needed to devote full time to the ceremonial and the promoting, the promoting of industry, the seeking of business and industry, the speaking and taking all the invitations you get for graduations and such things. You could devote all of your time to the administrative side of it, dealing with the day-to-day problems of state government, and then there is the other side where you fill the unique role of a chief executive dealing with the legislature, dealing with the kind of executive-level problems that are not just the day-to-day administration. It's like a corporate chairman being the chairman and chief executive officer and the president and the chief operating officer because you can't delegate the chief operating responsibilities to somebody else. That's sort of what it's like.

CBG: Did you find your time divided roughly a third and a third and a third, or did one take more than the others? Was this a typical day?

REM: It was almost a typical day. There was a constant struggle, you know, even among the staff and the people in government responsible for various parts of all of this total operation. The Development Board, for instance, was constantly tugging for more time to sit down with this group or that group that were visiting the state or to go to New York or to Chicago or to California or to London or to Frankfurt or to Japan for a few days in search of industry, and we tried to give them a priority. At the same time, if the legislature was in session, you had your daily problems there that you had to deal with, meetings, and being available for communications or meetings on almost an instantaneous basis, and then you had sort of your administrative

problems with department heads and all, trying to get implemented and stay on top of things you wanted to do. So it was a tug and a tug of war to do all of those things and keep some balance and feel like you really had devoted enough time to any one of them.

The main thing you discover in a hurry is that you cannot take all of the invitations to speak and to visit all of the places on a nonessential basis that come to you, and you find you have to begin to budget your time, establish priorities, and get other people to do some parts of it for you.

CBG: Do people generally understand that?

REM: It's hard for them to understand it. I think the most difficulty you have when you first get there is to deal with all of your real strong friends and supporters who want you to come to their community or to their club and speak and have difficulty understanding why you can't do it for them and not for everybody else. That's a very difficult thing, and you have to understand that from their standpoint they were out front for you, and back in the community everybody looked for them for direct communications, and if they couldn't get you, it's sort of their impression that, "Well, he puts other people ahead of me."

CBG: Yes.

REM: So that's one of the most difficult things you have to do.

CBG: Did you handle a lot of that by telephone?

REM: Well, yes, you did that a lot by telephone. I had an unusual problem, though, since I was lieutenant governor and had become governor. Lo and behold, I had the lieutenant governor and the governor's schedule combined, and the lieutenant governor is the one you could call on and send to all of these welcomes and dedications and rotary clubs and ceremonial-type functions. Well I didn't have a lieutenant governor, and I commented on it a number of times that I spent more time filling the lieutenant governor's schedule than I did the governor's schedule because as lieutenant governor I'd made so many commitments to so many statewide functions and organizations that had to be taken care of. It was right funny that the governor was substituting for the lieutenant governor more than the lieutenant governor substituting for the governor. It was a reverse twist, and the legislature was in session. They were in the final work on the state appropriation bill. Everything was sort of happening at probably the busiest time that we go through in any year.

CBG: Particularly in that April of 1965 when all the transition started.

REM: All the transition started. You know we finished in one of the few times the legislature ever got out of here in the forty legislative days and ever got out of here without a conference or a free conference report on the state appropriation bill. I always said it wasn't as much our working together as their sympathy for me, their feeling sorry for me and deciding to help me through that first year by really cooperating and working out the differences in sessions and conferences and getting the state appropriation bill through and getting out of here to give me time to go through the normal acclimation and orientation process.

CBG: Did you sit down with Mrs. [Katherine] Wolfe, say, or some other staff members and work out a schedule for the day?

REM: Well, again, starting off like I did, I started off early in the morning, and I ended up late in the evening, and hard as I tried, I never got out of that. You know, once you establish sort of a schedule in an office like that, it's difficult to change it. So I established sort of a practice of being there early and staying until I had gotten through in the evening, and everybody continued to think that's the way you should and did operate.

CBG: Was that like seven to seven?

REM: I usually got in the office by eight o'clock in the morning, and then is when we looked at what we hadn't done the day before, things we had for the day, and spent a little time with the staff to get organized for the day because telephones normally start ringing about eight-thirty. By nine o'clock, what you haven't already done is gone for that day until late afternoon. We always worked through the day and stayed on in the evening until we got through and until we returned our phone calls, or we parceled the calls out to various staff members who would be appropriate to return the calls and see if they could handle it. If they couldn't, then I would call in the next day or two. That began to work better and better. So it was trying to at least use part of the morning to plan that day's activities, to find out what you had, and then try to rearrange if you got into some difficulty because of something happening you didn't anticipate, and that always took place.

CBG: Did your days get shorter as you got into the full term?

REM: I think days, if anything, got longer . . .

CBG: Got longer.

REM: . . . and it was early on that I saw what the schedule was going to be and realized what effect it was going to have on the family. We sat down and said we've got to sort of set some priorities there and determined early that there would be no activities on Sunday. Not that I had any strong feelings, but it was just a physical impossibility to go seven days a week at the pace we had to go and deal with the kinds of problems. So we determined early that we would take no invitations on Sunday, we would dedicate no school buildings or industries on Sunday, that we would take no invitations to teach or to speak in someone else's church, just as a matter of policy, and make that known so that everybody could plan otherwise. I stayed with that pretty rigidly and gave Sunday to the family. We said we'd go to our church on Sunday, and we'd spend the day all together.

Saturdays were different. Saturdays there was always something somewhere that we had to do and particularly in the fall of the year with Bobby, our son, playing football. Everybody knew you didn't ask us to do anything that conflicted with a PC [Presbyterian College] football game. We loved athletics. We'd go to a high school football game on Friday night because we had our younger children in school. Robin was in high school. We'd go to a high school football game on Friday nights and see PC play on Saturday and see the University [of South Carolina] play on Saturday evening. But in between we'd wedge in, if somebody had something, and folks learn to schedule things sort of around that. I can recall touring Laurens County industries on a Saturday through lunch and going to a PC football on Saturday afternoon, or if there was a game up at Wofford, going up early for lunch or for a reception or touring some facility or some school then.

CBG: It's possible to touch a lot of hands, too, at a football game. I mean a lot of people coming in . . .

REM: It is, but . . .

CBG: . . . to the games just to say hello.

REM: . . . but we made another point there with a son playing who was conscious of the game and conscious of the eyes that focused on him. We had a strong policy that we did not want to be introduced or recognized at a football game. It just caused him all kinds of trouble. He felt like everybody watched him anyway, knew what he was, saw every mistake he made, but if they ever introduced us over the loud speaker system, I mean he just froze almost. So there we came as parents, we sat with the parents of the other players and never would sit in a box or be singled out or anything during that. But still, everybody knew you were there, and probably politically it was better than going the other way, quite frankly.

CBG: Something a lot of citizens forget is that governors are people, too, and often times parents that are trying to live their private lives simultaneously with this public one, and that leads to some interesting intersections like that.

REM: Well, it was all those kinds of things, and you had to learn early that, as much as everybody wanted Josephine every time I was invited, that she couldn't do it all because of the children. We had one daughter in high school and two in elementary school. One who was just, I think, in the third grade, and coming from Allendale where they had their mother's attention all the time, full-time, that was a transition for them. We were conscious of that, and we just had to be very careful in how much we scheduled her. She got involved early on in the restoration of the governor's mansion, refurnishing, refurbishing and fixing up the grounds, and later in the project of the acquisition of the Lace House and the restoration of it to tie in with that area. So it soon developed that she maintained a schedule, and I maintained a schedule, and she would put nothing on her's at night. She would be available for major functions at night, but primarily would be at home with the children.

CBG: Are there enough, let's say, stable points during the year for the schedule to stay basically the same, or does it change from season to season?

REM: Well, it changed some when the legislature was in session, which was half the year, and the longest it stayed, the more important that became. As you got further into the session, important legislation was always in the crucial stages. The state appropriation bill, which was your chief concern because that determined your program for the next year, required more of your time. So that dictated largely what other things you could do, and so much of it had to revolve around being available and having the time to sit and talk with committees, individual legislators, groups of legislators, business people that were interested in discussing with you things that were going on there and just a lot of times general public concerns about the legislature.

The schedule would lighten up some during the summer, but you found yourself building in all the things you hadn't been able to do and doing the things you had to put off until the summer months. Then the fall of the year got hectic again because of all the activities of the fall, the preparation for the coming legislative session. It was always my feeling that what we did in the fall of the year largely determined the success we had in the legislature because we believed in planning and getting our programs together and sitting down with everybody and discussing them, getting the department heads, getting the boards, getting whatever in the outside community we needed to have support from, and dealing with the major leaders in

the legislature on whatever subject matter that you were going to deal with. So the fall of the year went into that, and then October was always budget hearing. The Budget and Control Board met every October to hear all the requests, to deal with all of those. So November and December were budget writing months because we always felt we had to have the Budget and Control Board report to the legislature by the time it arrived in early January. As I say, we had already through December met with the Ways and Means Committee, the Finance Committee, and others we felt were important to us to discuss with all of them and to tell them what we were doing. So it was a constant--somewhat different--but a constant heavy schedule, all of this without even talking about the other things that you did.

CBG: Did you ever have time to take a vacation?

REM: I don't think I have had a vacation since I came [chuckles] to Columbia . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . .in April 1965. We had planned one for that year when the legislature was out. We always took one or two weeks in the summer to go to the beach, Edisto or Myrtle Beach or some place like that, with our family and some friends of ours, another family that we did that with every time. Normally I would try to spend at least one full week and part of the other with them, if not the two weeks. I found that when I took the oath of office as governor that there just wasn't time for vacations. As I say, we had planned one that year, we were going to borrow a friend's van and take all the kids and drive cross country to California and back, one month, and we put it off to the wrong year, and we never did get to take it, never have gotten to take it.

We got a lot of nice trips, though, naturally, governors' conferences, trips where the family went to those. We got a lot of nice invitations for weekends, and that was pretty much it. The family always went to Myrtle Beach every summer for a couple of weeks, and what I would do is spend as much time during that as I could. I'd get down sometimes on Thursday afternoons for the weekend, or I'd fly down on Fridays and stay until Monday if I could, but usually it was a day or two here and a day or two there. That's where I got into trying to get long weekends every now and then. If I could get out on a Thursday afternoon and get to the farm for a long weekend until Sunday, I could refresh myself physically and mentally and get ready to go again.

CBG: What did you do for recreation yourself?

REM: That was my recreation or once in awhile getting off on a duck hunting trip or a quail hunting trip over night for a day with some friends. We used some of the state facilities more than they do now and I suppose you would have to say those were relaxing times. They were to me. I would use Belmont and take two or three friends down for overnight and quail hunt, and more often I would take some of the major department heads that we were working with on programs down for work and recreation.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Or we'd go to the wildlife place at Eutaw Springs and spend a couple of days really planning what we were going to try to accomplish in education or in the health field or in the development program. We'd go to Wampee, which was Santee Cooper's place at Moncks Corner. That was one of the easy places to go to because the facilities were there. My own personal recreation came when I got down to the farm and got away from everything and everybody and spent a day or two days in total relaxation.

CBG: During those times did you just kind of walk around and think?

REM: No, what I did there was ride around in the pickup truck with the fellow looking after the farm, probably count every pig and calf and cow about fifteen times and sort them out and talk about which ones to keep and which ones to sell, ride the horse, look at the timber, ride through the woods and look at the timber and determine what we needed to do, if anything, about that, and I found that when I got on the horse and got away that was the most relaxing time. So I normally rode several hours every day.

CBG: Did you ever have a sense of dread of coming back to all of this?

REM: [chuckles] You know, you have to admit that [chuckles] . . .

CBG: I had some feelings like that going to college, I think [laughter].

REM: I have to admit that there were several times when it took all the courage in the world to get up enough nerve to come back. Occasionally you really had to force yourself . . .

CBG: The pressure just . . .

REM: To come back.

CBG: . . . builds sometimes, doesn't it, and things get so . . .

REM: Well, you know, you knew you were coming back, and when you walked in that door, you know, it was just another world. I think that's what made it possible really. You didn't have time to get ready for it. When you walked in the door, it all happened, so you forgot about not wanting to be there and not wanting to come back and wishing you didn't have to face those problems because they were there.

CBG: In looking at something like we talked about a minute ago, the legislature, was it usual to sit down maybe at the end of the summer or early in the fall before the budget hearings started to make a schedule by which you were going to accomplish things, kind of a timetable to go along with planning?

REM: We tried to do that. You know we got into planning. Not taking away from anybody else but by reason of the federal programs and the availability of funds, we got into planning on a more professional basis than anybody had had the opportunity of doing before. So, yes, we'd sit with someone and talk about wanting to deal with the problems of corrections, for instance, and we'd get someone in from the planning office with the staff and the department people and others who had an interest in corrections and talk about the problems we had and some of the things we ought to address and start working on some plan for that department. Or to talk about some of the other things, you know PRT [Parks, Recreation, and Tourism], in its infancy then, and they would be developing a plan, and we'd try to determine what we wanted to implement or what we wanted to try to implement during the coming year knowing we couldn't do it all at one time, phasing in things.

We worked on, for instance, the capital needs of state government. We had a thorough study of all the departments and agencies, where they were, what they were doing, what space they needed, looking at growth and trying to determine how we could physically coordinate, knowing that unless we could physically coordinate them, it was difficult to coordinate their activities. We determined high priority items on the list that we wanted to do.

I sort of put higher education and early childhood education as the two high priority items on the list because we were nonexistent in one and woefully weak in the other. So we sat down and tried to plan how we were going to approach the problems of higher education, to make it more available to the youngsters of the state who couldn't afford to leave home and didn't have the money to go to Carolina or Clemson or one of the state-supported schools. They couldn't afford to go to private schools at that time. Looking at the universities, we could say, "We just aren't competing. There's no way we can attract industry when we aren't competing with Chapel Hill and Virginia and the University of Georgia." How do we do that?

So it was a constant thing of trying to put all that together and of finding the right people that I felt comfortable with, like [James A.] Jim Morris from the university, and just really giving them responsibility to bring these things together and coordinate our activities and develop some priorities and decide what we can do and how we can do it.

END OF SIDE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 30, Side 2, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair as a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is October 11, 1983. Governor, in working with plans and schedules we can make the suggestion that one is scheduling things day-to-day and then almost hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute, and then one's trying to plan the legislative year and schedule that, and then one has a vision in 1965 of what life is going to be like in 1980 or 1990 or maybe even 2000. How did you fit all this together? I mean, was it easy to keep a vision of a long-term future with a hectic present, or did you find things sliding together?

REM: Well, you know, I . . .

CBG: That's a tough question.

REM: It is a tough question. I sort of felt that things would work out if you really worked at it and would sort of fall together, that you could have all the master plans in the world, and they would never work out like that. I determined that I'd seen enough master plans drawing dust on the shelves that I just wasn't going to set out to develop a master plan for South Carolina for several reasons. One is it wasn't possible to do it, and it wasn't practical to do it. You know, that was your master plan, and then the next fellow comes along in the Governor's Office, and he's going to get his master plan. So why waste all your time trying? But at the same time, you looked out there, you sort of had a vision of what you wanted to see, the direction you wanted to see the state go in, and what you really wanted to accomplish, but the most you could do is plan for the seventies. We were then in the mid-sixties and late sixties; and thus we were trying, knowing that anything we started in 1967 wasn't going to really be implemented until 1968 or 1969 at the earliest. So you were sort of programming for the seventies, planning for the seventies. It sort of worked. If you got people together and got them working together, you could accomplish a lot more. So we had some long-range visions, but we tried to avoid master planning. It had a bad name, and South Carolina didn't like it. Legislators resented it, and yet we worked to accomplish what we thought was best and to build a base for the future.

The Capitol Complex is one example. We sat down, took a look at state government, with a study by the planning group, and found that the physical location was as fragmented as the services they were rendering and the effort they were performing out there. As I said, I started off on communications coordination and cooperation. How in the world could an agency out on Bluff Road communicate and coordinate with somebody out where SLED [State Law Enforcement Division] was? So we began to look at functions of government and to say if we want to coordinate our effort, we've got to pull those agencies and departments that are performing compatible functions closer together. So there we started with the law enforcement and corrections complex. SLED was already there and it was a good location. Juvenile Corrections was out in that area. Corrections was out in that general area. So we said, "Let's put all of the facilities, the administrative facilities right in that area where, by gosh, they're all close together. At least they can walk from one building to another."

The health and welfare agencies, all of them were scattered all over everywhere. So we decided to take where Mental Health was--and they had all that land out there--and make that sort of a Health and Welfare complex. Thus, as best we could determine, hopefully, we could direct the future, that everybody in the future would build facilities, building right in the complexes, and that the core of state government, that is, the central core of it ought to be pulled in together. It again was fragmented everywhere, and our determination was to take the Capitol Complex and pull in the central part of state government into that area. The only way to do it, with space like it was, was to find a way to park automobiles. That was the trouble with downtown Columbia. You couldn't build buildings if you couldn't park automobiles, and we discovered that in a study. I don't think any of us had thought about it until we asked Wilbur Smith to do a study along with [William] Lyles. In the past, we'd gotten the architects to come in and draw us a building, and they'd put it up, and nobody thought about traffic, transportation problems, parking vehicles, and all of that. This time--and there was no magic in it--we pulled in Wilbur Smith, Lyles and those, we even brought in some space utilization people, who weren't too well accepted by the Lyles firm, to help a little bit on utilization of space in these buildings, and then Robert Marvin and Associates because to me the aesthetics of the whole area were just as essential as that they be located right.

We saw we were building a new center for Columbia with everything revolving around it, and it ought to be aesthetically and architecturally tied in together. I didn't want another University of South Carolina. I just thought it was horrible to get different architects to design different buildings and give them no guidelines and say, "Just go build a monument to yourself and win an award," and nobody could tell whether it was the university or whether it was some private corporation or whether it was the city government. There's just no compatibility of the plans. So we felt like we needed to do that, we did, and that study sort of formed a basis for the coordination of facilities which we hoped, long-term, would provide for coordination of effort.

CBG: That raises an interesting point about specialization and how specialization is contained in a bureaucracy with agencies that do specific things. It occurs to me in this example that even in the private sector people are doing specific things and how difficult it is to get them together. Is that the roughest thing about scheduling or planning for a governor, getting different specialists to sit down and, I'd guess you'd say, be on the same wavelength?

REM: The bureaucracy of government is the hardest thing you have to deal with. There are only two ways to deal with it. One is muscle and force and you can't do that in South Carolina . . .

CBG: It takes so much energy.

REM: . . . and accomplish anything. So much energy, and it's wasted energy because, on the one hand, our system is so good for continuity and stability with your board and commission operations where the director of a program is appointed by them and the governor can't fire and hire the director. So you can't use force, and it takes so much time the other way, by persuasion, and they all want to protect their turf. For instance we discovered that Mental Health, Welfare, everybody had their separate computers and they fought, bled, and died over the fact that, "If we don't have ours, how are we going to use it? We don't have control." Control is the real problem you fight in the bureaucratic system of government. We had a study made, for the first time ever, a study, and there was total autonomy almost. They ordered them on their own, and nobody knew they had them or had anything to do with them.

So we had a study made. Lo and behold, we had computers all over state government, some of them not using them more than two and three hours a day, and the study showed that if they weren't used at least two shifts a day they were not economical, not justifiable. So with that, we started work on it, and we had to do an educational job on Health and Welfare and people like that and convince them that it didn't matter whether you owned it or what, if you had access to it. Availability meant all. So we then said, "Look, we can get one that all of you can use. We can get maximum utilization at least two shifts a day and justify it." It took a long time, a lot of hard work, a lot of staff time to do it, and a lot of coercion. We then determined the Budget and Control Board would take over all of this thing and put in a policy that nobody could order one without approval of the Budget and Control Board. That's the way we got the stick on top of the carrot.

We did the same thing with law enforcement. It was shocking that we had the highway patrol, the highway department, with a computer that had all the traffic violations, but if they stopped somebody, all they could get was traffic violations. There was no way they could tell the poor patrolman out there that that guy had been charged with highway robbery, murder, or had been convicted or anything like that. It just

wasn't accessible to him, but we had it. We were getting it out at SLED through the FBI computers. So we said, "My gosh, if we put all this together, coordinate all of this into one system, and give everybody access to it, the highway patrolman, when he stops the car, gets the instant, complete, comprehensive printout on everybody." Then we found that Greenville had one, Columbia had one, Charleston had one, we had one, and there was no interconnection. We could get somebody in Horry County for robbery or something like that and try him down there and never know that he had been arrested and tried and convicted in Greenville or Anderson or Charleston five times before.

So we determined to put in one central system and put everything in there and require the clerks of court to send all of that information in so that it all got on the computer so if you picked up somebody, wherever he is, you got a printout on his whole criminal record. That went on into education. One of my big things was that we were doing all of this recruiting for industry. We were committed to recruit and train through the special schools division. We had all these boxes and boxes of information on paper about every individual in this state who had ever entered the public schools, but you couldn't get it. It just wasn't available. So we sat down and probably the most difficult battle we had was to get TEC [Technical Education] and the Department of Education and all to agree on a central information system, one central system. The whole objective was to be able to get a profile of South Carolina instantaneously. If you wanted to go into Allendale County and you wanted to know the names of everybody down there who completed more than the ninth grade, you could get it from TEC because they had access to all those stowed-away files that the Department of Education take the retirement system. If I wanted to know how many redheaded females over thirty-five years old were on the retirement system, just as a matter of information, or how many school teachers we had or what about somebody they had to go back and manually pull the files. When I wanted all that information at one time because we wanted to do something for everybody who'd been retired more than a certain number of years, they said it would take weeks and weeks. I said, "We'll get it authorized for them to go get--from what was comparable to Manpower--help to come in and get all that information for us," but to get this doggone thing on the computers in the meantime so the next time we want it, we can get it. We said let's put in one central computer to handle all of the core financial matters involved in state government where we could have instant access to it.

Now those were the kinds of things that required the governor sitting in on conferences. That's what brought us in to where I spent hours after hours. So that's when you get into the administrative side of sitting and planning.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I think people soon learned that they weren't working a nine-to-five day with me. I wasn't going to work from seven thirty, eight o'clock in the morning until seven thirty, eight o'clock at night, and then run make a speech to some group and confine my conferences to nine to five. You know, most of them were before and after but, yes, scheduling and all was an impossible situation.

CBG: Did you give any consideration to scheduling or trying to plan or manage the transition for these achievements and hopes, as we've been describing them, to the next administration?

REM: Well, you did, and the best way to do it was to get it in place and hopefully get solid commitments to it from those people that were going to be there, the department heads. I worked a lot with boards and commissions, with the chairmen of the boards. I would meet with the full commission a lot of times on these kinds of things in order to get their commitment or because I felt like that way where I knew we had a recalcitrant, or a difficult department head that if the board and the commission was tuned in, then that would carry on. That's about the only way you could do it. A few of them you could lock in, but very few could you lock in with any assurance that legally it would be mandated to carry on like you'd planned to.

CBG: Is there any conscious effort to plan a transition?

REM: Well, again, I didn't have time for one, so I was aware of just how difficult it was to go through it. I had been through one as lieutenant governor when the [Ernest] Hollings-[Donald] Russell transition took place and saw how terribly difficult it was for the person coming in to just walk in there on twelve o'clock noon . . .

CBG: Just discontinued.

REM: . . . without having had any communications or any involvement or any organized transition effort at all, and there was absolutely none on that one, as most people remember. So I determined that we'd try to do it differently and I think the relationship that John West and I developed during the time we worked together made it awfully easy because he was so involved in what was going on and was such a part of what was going on until it was almost like a corporate transition where he just moved from lieutenant governor to governor. We did set up a mechanism. We authorized him some funds to set up a staff to help him and gave him offices and let him work for a good smooth transition so that I don't think there was any noticeable change other than personality and face when we turned it around to him.

CBG: Did you make any personal plans of what you were going to do?

REM: Well, you know, all through there I doubt if anybody much thinks a whole lot about what he's going to do. Again, it's hard to plan from day to day and to think from year to year. I suppose my thought had always been--or the further I got into it--that this was probably going to be sort of the end of my active, office-seeking, political career. The further I got into it and the more committed I got to doing some of the things we were trying to do, I felt that really I had no ambition to do anything else and probably would not seek elective public office again. So toward the end of it, I did begin to think about where I'm going, what I'm going to do because I had to, and I had to make the decision whether I was going back to Allendale to the law practice there. In my mind--and I never let it outside--I considered whether I'd go to Charleston.

CBG: It's a familiar hometown.

REM: . . . which was a familiar area and all, and I always liked that area. I toyed with the idea of going back to Berkeley County or whether I would stay in Columbia. Once you kind of got those kind of thoughts in your mind, then, you know, did you want to join a law firm which provided you with security and not have to establish something. We went through that. We went through some discussions about that, some discussions with people. I think there was a general assumption on the part of a lot of people that I'd come out and join this or that law firm in Columbia. The more I got into it and the more I thought about it, the more I determined that I really would like to sort of control my own future more, and I could see if I joined this or that law firm that I would be putting myself in a position of not having that kind of total control over what I did, what we did, whether we got into this, that, or the other, and that I might be marketed in areas a little more than I wanted to be.

So we determined that I would just go out and open an office and try to establish something that had not been established before. In my own mind I had a short term and long term plan that I wanted to see if we could build something in South Carolina comparable and competitive with the firms in Atlanta and eliminate the necessity of people going to Washington to get work done. With that I decided the best way to do it was to do it where I could exercise the kind of control that I needed to build that or to try to build that and determined that [James S.] Jim Konduros, who had been in Washington, had a Washington experience, offered--though he'd never practiced law before--something to build on in an area that nobody else had built on here. Wayne Corley, who was bright, young, energetic, had worked with all of the state agencies and people around the state, well known and attractive, those two gave me what I needed to sort of begin to build on.

CBG: Do you recall what you did the first day out of office?

REM: I sure do. [chuckles] The last day, I think I've already described it where I almost ran late for John West's inauguration because everybody still wanted to see me and get things done. I went through the inaugural ceremonies with all of the staff availability and my aides and security and everything else. We had planned to take a month. Josephine [Mrs. McNair] and I had planned that month that we never had gotten, and we were going to get the office settled in the first day or two and take off and go to the farm with the idea of staying there for a month or, you know, doing something, just take a month off to kind of get physically and mentally refreshed a little bit. I had a barbershop appointment the next morning. So I had to go to the barbershop the first thing the next morning. It didn't dawn on me until I started down the front steps that I never had driven an automobile to the barber shop. I knew where it was, but I didn't know how to get there from where we were. We'd gone from the mansion the day before to a little small apartment owned by a friend of mine . . .

CBG: Yes.

REM: . . . out on Forest Drive that night. We'd gone home there that night, and I didn't know how to get to where I was going. I went down to get in the automobile and got in the car, and the thing was sitting on Empty. There wasn't enough gas, I didn't think, to get to the corner. Nobody had thought about we had to gas up the car, and Josephine had run it empty. So I had to go back and get her attention and . . .

CBG: Start over.

REM: . . . start over again and get her to tell me where to go. Tootsie Brantley always tells the story that the next morning Mrs. McNair looked out and said, "You are going to be late for the barbershop." And I said, "Well, I'm going to be there as soon as I can." And she said, "Well, you can't drive the car from the back seat." [laughter]

CBG: It's a pretty humbling story. [chuckles]

REM: That was pretty good.

CBG: Yes.

REM: But anyway that was my first day. I went to the barbershop and went by the office and never have gotten out of there since that morning. Fortunately, the telephone starting ringing, and people started wanting to come by, and things started happening. We got awfully busy, and we've sort of continued on pretty much the same hourly schedule and about the same physical pace that I had before.

CBG: Are ex-governors called on for . . .

REM: [chuckles]

CBG: . . . let's say, significant tasks?

REM: The answer's no because when you've finished, you're through. They may call on you for some things, but not very much. I think that's why so many get restless and end up running for other things because they don't get into something that occupies them and takes care of it. Therefore, they want to do other things. I never had that, fortunately, because I got so involved in building the law practice. I stay involved politically as national committee person and got involved in the corporate world, which was most fortunate, to get on some corporate boards. That kept me on about the same pace of travel and work schedule and involvement with pretty much the same people.

END OF TAPE