

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

Interview

with

Robert E. McNair

Interviewer:

Cole Blease Graham

Date:

July 7, 1982

CBG: This is Tape 6, 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 July 7, 1982. Governor, as we finished the last tape, we were summarizing one of your initial experiences as a newly-elected lieutenant governor and that was to preside over the seating conflict between Mr. [Edwin] Myrick and Mr. [Richard] Williams from your own county. Could you tell us how that event turned out?

REM: Well, after much debate and many recounts, the Senate had to take a direct vote on the seating of one of them, and they seated Dick Williams to replace Ed Myrick as senator. As I mentioned last time, Myrick had served for about twelve years consecutively, having been there also for a period before and he was sort of in and out. The vote was tied when the Senate finished its roll call and one of the senators, Senator [Frank] Timmerman from Edgefield, changed his vote, and that made the deciding vote. I think there was a lot of apprehension about what I would do if--naturally, being from Allendale and being friends with both of them--I had to vote on that issue right in the beginning. I had already made a determination that, as lieutenant governor, I did not have a vote on something like that--the seating of a senator. That was peculiarly for the Senate itself. I think Lieutenant Governor Nancy Stevenson confirmed that recently in the [Eugene] Carmichael matter where she announced in advance that she would not vote and did not have a vote. That ended there, and there were a lot of reverberations and repercussions for a long time back in Allendale.

CBG: Did you think that the result had any direct influence on your own political future at that time?

REM: Not on my political future but on the relationships in Allendale, Allendale being a very, very small county, and the town being, you know, about 3,500 people. There was such a personal relationship with everyone that you hated to get caught in the middle of something like that. It was a most unfortunate thing for the county to have something like that divide it and divide it so strongly. People that were friends for years were furious with each other and wouldn't speak with each other over that particular issue, and there I was, you know, as a new star, somebody from Allendale who'd been elected lieutenant governor. It had never happened before in all of our history, and it took a lot of the glitter off of being elected. It sort of tarnished that, and at home, it did put me in a rather awkward position. It continued for a long time because both sides had a general feeling that I had either meddled for one or the other or had let one or the other down by not participating more. The feeling was that I could have influenced the Senate vote in one direction or the other, on the one hand, or on the other hand, some thought I did. Actually, I had chosen, because it was Allendale and because of my new position, to stay completely and totally out of it and to leave it to the Senate.

CBG: Do those feelings last over a long period of time among groups like that?

REM: Politics in a small county run deep and strong; and it doesn't go away in a hurry. So that lasted for quite some time, but I think I was able to overcome it and didn't find any real difficulty stemming from it for a period.

CBG: After this baptism, as you think back on your new position as lieutenant governor, what were your expectations? Did you have some things that you wanted to do?

REM: I had always felt that the relationship between the House and Senate should be better, that it was sort of one going in one direction and one in another. I thought something could and should be done, particularly that the presiding officers ought to work together more closely. I tried, therefore, to bring the leadership of the two bodies into a better working relationship. I also felt that a lieutenant governor, without, involving himself in what was peculiarly the work of the Senate and the senators themselves, could and should provide some leadership over there to help them develop some plans for what they wanted to accomplish and help them get on with doing that. There just wasn't any coordination among leadership really. There wasn't any among the committee chairmen. There was no formalized or informal meeting of the leadership periodically to talk about things like that. So those were the kinds of things that I had felt could and should be done by a lieutenant governor.

In addition, I felt the lieutenant governor could and should be more than just a ceremonial person, you know, just stand up in his bright robe and preside, that there were other things he could do to help the governor, to help make state government function better without getting into the administration side and interfering or meddling with the governor's duties and responsibilities.

CBG: Did you find much support among others for your ideas, for example, from the Speaker of the House?

REM: Well, yes, the Speaker of the House was receptive to the idea, and I think the fact that we were such close friends and I had come along as a protégé of his and was really "one of his boys" as he has always referred to me, gave us that good relationship to start with, and we worked at it. We kept that relationship going and worked at trying to improve, at least the communications between the two bodies, and we also worked at trying to coordinate more with the Governor's Office and communicate more there.

CBG: What about some of the major senators like, for example, Senator [Edgar] Brown? Did he take to these ideas?

REM: Well, Senator Brown was one of those unusual people that the press and everybody had him as a fellow that had horns. He was one of the most likable, lovable gentlemen you would ever know. He could be very tough--no question about that--but one of the easiest people to work with that you would come into. He had a terribly good disposition and personality, as most people were aware of, a good sense of humor, and he mellowed in his old age. I think I came along at a good time to catch him in his mellowing time when he was beginning to turn some of the responsibilities over to Senator [Rembert] Dennis, who's now the chairman, Senator [James] Waddell, who was one of his leaders on his committee, and some of the other younger fellows coming along. Of course, the Senate was always leery of that close relationship with the House. There was a feeling certainly between powerful leaders that always is there. Mr. Blatt was a very strong and powerful speaker and leader of the House, and Senator Brown, with Senator [L. Marion] Gressette, were very powerful and strong-willed men over in the Senate. Communications was not always what it should be, what it ought to have been. I don't think they wanted to see the House influence on the Senate. That was something I had to overcome in their minds, that I wasn't Mr. Blatt's boy coming over, presiding over the Senate and trying to influence them.

CBG: Is that a function of the way those institutions are set up, or is that more of a potential disagreement over issues.

REM: I think it's just the way they're set up. You can look at any legislative branch of the government--the Congress or any state--and they work that way. That's probably the way they were intended to work, too, to allow more independence. It's probably good that the House and Senate don't rubber stamp one another.

CBG: Were there sharp differences among senators at this time on particular issues?

REM: Oh, yes, there were always very sharp issues between senators. There were very sharp differences between the two houses over broad philosophical-type things, as well as over issues that would develop. The balancing of the budget back then was one. We didn't have the Board of Economic Advisors in those early days, and the chairman of the state Tax Commission gave you what he thought the revenue was going to be, and that's the way you worked through the House. The House had a rule that it couldn't pass a state appropriations bill without the signature of the comptroller general. The Senate didn't have that rule. So the House would labor over the appropriations bill and have it in balance with a certificate. It would get over to

the Senate, and then they would load it down with all the goodies for the school teachers and the state employees and the department heads and get all the political benefits from sort of giving people things that they thought they wanted and needed. Then you'd get in conference committee, and again the House conferees would be the bad guys because they were the ones having to say, "We won't sign a conference report without bringing this thing in." Invariably, back in those days, the Senate would persuade the Tax Commission chairman to raise the estimate. That happened year after year after year. So those were things that I thought should be addressed--that we ought to try to get together and see if we couldn't come to some decision and agreement on what the projected revenue was going to be and then work within that and recognize that the Senate may want to emphasize one program over another where the House would go in a different direction. You're going to have those differences.

CBG: Was there anything to what's often called a dispute, I guess, between Mr. Blatt and Senator Brown? Was that evident at this time?

REM: Well, sure. The Blatt-Brown thing was there. You had two very powerful leaders who naturally were going to have their differences. Their differences would surface and would then get into the General Assembly and tie it up sometimes for weeks and weeks. I think there were personal differences between them because of the nature of the people--different personalities, different backgrounds, you know--and differences on certain basic issues, politics, as well. The one thing that I think, in the end, South Carolina gained was the fact that they both really and truly loved their state, and they both put what, in their judgment, was best for South Carolina first. Occasionally, they would go in different directions, but their ultimate aim and goal was the same, to do what was best for South Carolina. Because of that, we had a good, strong, stable, sound state government, and we had a progressive state government.

CBG: How did Governor [Donald] Russell figure into all this? Did he have a plan, and were you a part of this plan?

REM: Mr. Russell had been at the university [of South Carolina], as we've talked about earlier, and had run for governor [in 1958] and lost, had come back and run again and won, and we all looked on him as being what we were saying was going to be the education governor that South Carolina had been looking for and needing for all these years. With his background and being the intellectual person he was, he had always--with Mr. Byrnes--taken a strong interest in education. He had his experience at the university and saw what we needed to build a university system to really undergird the whole educational program in the state. That's what we were looking for from him, and that's what he started out with, this emphasis on education. He was

tackling that problem and trying to bring about some coordination of the education effort and was beginning to get into it. However, you know, his term lasted two years, and he didn't go beyond that.

CBG: Was there much concern about actually getting away from the old “separate but equal approach” and implementing the *Brown* decision during these Russell times?

REM: There was. We had come in the early fifties with Mr. Byrnes and the sales tax program to comply fully with the “separate but equal” to make the schools equal, and as we've said, the black schools thus were the new schools. In addition, we started a statewide transportation program in order to provide transportation for the black students. In the end, that turned out to be just a great thing for us because it eased the pains of integration. We didn't have to then go and spend all that money to build new schools all over again, and we didn't have to go buy buses to transport. We were already doing that. What we had to do was to . . . and we'd gone through sort of a re-districting of school districts, you recall, back when we passed the sales tax act and set up the School Finance Commission headed by old Dr. J. Ryan Crow. He was just a great fellow who ran it and ran it like it ought to be. We ended up with something like a hundred school districts in South Carolina instead of a thousand or more that we had prior to that, and with that we didn't have a bunch of little tiny districts, autonomous districts, to make these decisions. So we had laid the ground work for one system that proved to be a godsend when we had to move into the integrated school system, eliminate the dual system. I think one of the big problems, though, was moving the integrated school into the so-called “black school” because that was the newer and better facility.

CBG: Did all these forces converge during the early time in Russell's administration?

REM: Well, at the college level they did. That was Clemson, which was a carry-over from Governor [Ernest F.] Hollings to Governor Russell's administration, the integration at Clemson with Harvey Gantt. Again, we were fortunate, both that it was Clemson and that it was Harvey Gantt. Harvey Gantt was a very conscientious young man who wanted an education, didn't want to be a symbol, didn't want to be a crusader, and didn't want to be a part of that and wouldn't let himself be used to that extent. Clemson, being an isolated college community, was much easier to control for any potential trouble. It was easy to sort of seal off the Clemson campus and avoid the outside troublemakers that always came into situations like this, and [Robert C.] Bob Edwards did a masterful job at Clemson because he had control of Clemson University. He ran the institution like no president I've ever known. It was handled extremely well and smoothly, and then with the one here, at this university, a somewhat similar thing. The young lady who came here was very bright, very

intelligent, from a good family, a good background. I've forgotten her first name, Monteith, and it went smoothly without any problem at all.

So we moved into this period at the university level first, I'm sure having benefited tremendously from the experiences in Alabama and Mississippi and Arkansas, and places like that, and with a determination that we had too much pride to see this state get embroiled in a reoccurrence of those kinds of incidents.

CBG: So the strategy really was to develop from the higher education institutions on down.

REM: Well, I'm not sure that was the strategy as much as it was the way things developed. In looking back, you know, it was probably a good thing. Had we developed it, we probably would have said, "Let's start with the first grade," and perhaps we would have had more trouble because, in the end, you will recall, it was the mothers and families of these young kids that created the most difficulty for us. People didn't want their little children going to school together, and, thus, the mothers of the younger children were the ones that were involved in the mothers' marches and the demonstrations, and the families of the younger children got more involved than they did at the high school level.

We discovered early that athletics is a great thing. You know, it doesn't just bring people together for sporting events and fellowship, but it served a good purpose in the integration of the public school program where at the high school level particularly the athletes played together, and the athletic programs really got stronger and stronger. There was less and less opposition to what was going on than there would have been.

CBG: As you think back now about the Russell years and the specific developments during his time in office and your time as lieutenant governor, can you make some generalizations, some summary of what happened during this period? What you think your major accomplishments were?

REM: Well, I don't know that you have major accomplishments when you're lieutenant governor. I have said to people who have asked me about my career in government how I would sort of classify it because I had served in the legislature, as lieutenant governor, and as governor. I said, "Well, the best way I can describe it is that I had more power as a legislator, particularly more power as chairman of the Judiciary Committee than at any other time. I had more fun, just enjoyed more being lieutenant governor because you didn't have to make decisions to any great extent and you were able to work with people and try to coordinate and travel around and make appearances and all, and then I had more influence as governor because of the office.

So as lieutenant governor, you really don't accomplish a great deal other than in a quiet sort of way in trying to influence the leadership getting together and talking about what legislative matters they had before them and what they wanted to do this week and what they wanted to get through this week if they could. So by working with them we could develop a strategy for moving forward important legislation. We could develop a strategy for avoiding filibusters and things of that nature or at least filibusters on insignificant things to keep from getting to something of importance.

CBG: So basically, the idea of lieutenant governor, at least at this stage, is to be available, to be fluid, to meet with people, and to confer.

REM: That's right. The lieutenant governor presided over the Senate, and that was his only official duty at that time. I had hoped to begin developing, you know, a broader role for the lieutenant governor, working with the governor's office as perhaps a liaison with the Senate, particularly, and with the House in trying to sit in and help develop a broad program and then being a part of moving it forward, feeling that the lieutenant governor could do that because he had more time and had more direct communications with the members of the General Assembly and spent more time with them than the governor could. We did not get too deeply into that, however, at that time.

I also felt that the lieutenant governor could and should be utilized more on important occasions where the governor couldn't participate, and particularly in the development program where the governor couldn't go to New York to a luncheon or couldn't go to Europe on an industrial mission, that the lieutenant governor was the appropriate person to go. Europeans are influenced by titles, you know. They are more title conscious than we are, and, therefore, the chairman of the State Development Board appearing at a function was not like the lieutenant governor appearing if the governor couldn't be there. We were able to get more involved, and I think I sort of got more involved as lieutenant governor in the development program than had previously been the case and developed a good working relationship with the board itself, to be available to help them whenever they needed it. There were things like that that, I felt the lieutenant governor could do without trying to project himself as another governor or as an assistant governor or anything like that.

CBG: Did you meet and talk a lot with Governor Russell?

REM: Ah, not a great deal. We did some. We had always been friends, and we had a personal relationship, but Mr. Russell was not someone who had a lot of close friends or was not a person that shared. I think I'm

more the one that likes to pull people in and share with them. Mr. Russell was a little different in personality.

CBG: So it's not that you all would take your shoes off and talk for an hour or so about the future of the state.

REM: No, we didn't get into all that. He didn't really operate that way.

CBG: If you stop now to think about, let's say, the first of January in 1965, did you have any idea that you would actually be the Governor before the year was out?

REM: No, I don't think the idea ever crossed my mind until Senator [Olin] Johnston had to go in the hospital, and we heard that his health was in serious shape.

CBG: Did people know that he had been sick, or indeed had he been sick?

REM: Well, his health had been declining some, but he had managed to carry on his duties and keep going, and we had gotten the word that his health was a little worse than we thought it was. Then when he entered the hospital, there was not a lot of discussion about it, but the general feeling was that Senator Johnston's health was not good at all. At the same time, there was never any discussion. Nobody ever said anything at all about it although you laughed with other lieutenant governors around the country about what the lieutenant governor really does each day. The story goes, "The first thing he did was get up, read the newspaper, have a cup of coffee, and check on the health of the governor. I think the significant thing in all of that was that he got the newspaper to check on the health of the governor. I said, "Does that tell you that lieutenant governors are that close to the governors around the country that they have to read the newspaper?"

CBG: So Senator Johnston's death in effect came as a shock.

REM: It really did, yes. People close in began to know he was in serious shape, but generally it was a shock on that Easter Sunday morning when word came out that Senator Johnston had died.

CBG: What happened? How did events construct themselves?

REM: We often say that was an exciting time. Josephine and I were up early to go to the Easter sunrise service in Allendale and heard it on the car radio driving out. We almost turned around because we knew if we heard it, that everybody else would have heard it, and we didn't want to disrupt the Easter sunrise service with people saying "What does this mean? What's going to happen now? But we went on out. Fortunately, very few had heard and we sneaked away and came back. From there, it was just a chain of events that people would normally expect. Mr. Russell called wanting to know if we'd heard the news. He said, "I think we ought to sit down and talk. Could you and Josephine drive up to Columbia? We did. We made arrangements, mutually agreed, that we shouldn't come in our car. So we borrowed an automobile and drove to Columbia. I had a good lengthy discussion that Sunday afternoon agreeing that this is something that should be kept very confidential, that it was not an appropriate time, the circumstances weren't right, and that he was not in any way indicating what he was going to do, but he simply wanted to talk about it.

CBG: Do you recall the conversation at all?

REM: Well, it went along the line that he had to really give some thought to what he wanted to do, and he wanted to talk with me about it. He wanted to know how I felt about it, and I recall saying, as I would again if I were asked to do it, "Mr. Russell, this is a decision that you have to make, and nobody else can make it for you because if it's a wrong decision you have to live with it. If it's a right decision, you have to live with it." I think I did say that I thought that his decision, if he chose to go, would be well received, that people were accustomed to having strong people, that he had a good background, that he'd been in Washington. Most of his career had been spent in Washington and he certainly could render this state a great service. We went from there to his saying that he was not going to make a decision until after the funeral. So we talked again after the funeral, in which he gave the definite indication that that was what he was going to do, but he still wanted to have some time to wrestle with it himself and come to that final decision that he came to very quickly with people like Senator Brown, Speaker Blatt, and all of them urging him to go on and go to the Senate. He called to advise me--I think I've forgotten the day in the week--but the next day, that he was going to do it, going to resign, and confirming that it met with my approval. He also wanted to hold off actually going through the formal ceremony for a couple of days.

END OF SIDE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO

CBG: This is Tape 6, Side 2, an interview with Governor Robert E. McNair, a part of the McNair Oral History Project of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Today's date is July 7, 1982. Governor, we were describing the flow of events with the resignation of Governor Russell.

REM: Yes. Immediately after the funeral, we talked, Mr. Russell and I, as I think I've already said, and he confirmed that's what he wanted to do. But he wanted a little while to think, to be sure his decision was right, and talk with a few more people. Shortly thereafter--I think that night probably--he called and confirmed that's what he was going to do. We talked about when and how. He wanted to delay it a couple of days to let things calm down, knowing that if it was something we were going to do, we had to do it soon because we needed somebody in the Senate, plus the transition is not something you hold up for any length of time.

We changed the time, the day, and the hour, a couple of times in the course of events. The press was just like it is now. They were beginning to put pressure on. They wanted confirmation, and we had set it for, I think, one afternoon. I recall calling Josephine to tell her that it was going to happen and to get her and the children up here the next day so they could be there for the formal ceremony. We planned to make it very simple and very dignified in light of the circumstances. It was nothing but a swearing-in, not an inauguration or something like that. With the pressure from the press--and they were about to break the story on him--he called back and wanted to know if Josephine could be there the next morning at ten o'clock. So that was where we had to go through an awful lot of getting her to the beauty parlor at daylight and getting her up here and getting the children all out of school to be up here, which we did and went through that ceremony in the morning.

CBG: During all this time, were you just sitting tight and waiting?

REM: I was sitting tight but having a lot of conversations with a lot of people because everybody was calling me to find out what was going to happen and also to also express themselves. They asked me, when they couldn't get through, to tell the governor how they felt. I think we found that most of his friends and most of my friends were trying to persuade him to go on to the Senate. That's where he wanted to be and that's where everybody felt he ought to be, that he was prepared for that. I think my friends all saw it as a real opportunity, and I think made me feel awfully good that the General Assembly was very, very strongly supportive of this taking place.

CBG: Was there much concern about, let's say, the organization that was Senator Johnston's?

REM: That was a concern, certainly, to everybody, and it involved Mr. Russell more than me where he, taking over as he did, had to assemble a staff very quickly. He had been friendly with Senator Johnston in his campaign for governor. They were friendly, and I think he got substantially the Johnston support in that

race. So there had been that friendship, though there hasn't always been the normal compatibility because they were totally different types of people. Mr. Russell then had to put his staff together. My conversation with him was that I had to have a staff, he had to have one, and I recall him saying to me, "I know you've got to have some people in the transition. You can have anybody from my staff you would like. I will work mostly with Olin's staff through the transition." We both agreed, however, that everybody ought to have, and had to have, his own staff. You know, you had to have your own people. It wasn't like department heads. These were staff people, and my decision was that I preferred to put my own staff together and to have people that I felt comfortable and compatible working with and suggested that he take his staff with him.

CBG: Was putting your staff together basically your first task after you were sworn in?

REM: It really was. The first thing after being sworn in was appointing him to the United States Senate, and we all laughed about that. I may have told the story that sitting up on the night before the changeover, when it was well known what was going to happen, my phone rang at the hotel, and it was a very prominent civil rights leader of the time on the white side, Maurice Bessinger.

CBG: Yes.

REM: Maurice rode his white horse with his white suit on in opposition to integration. He was a big supporter of George Wallace. When Mr. Russell was inaugurated he had a great big integrated barbeque on the mansion grounds, the first time anybody ever had that since Reconstruction. It created some discussion around the state and created a lot of talk and a lot of opposition. Maurice Bessinger and those, of course, resented it very strongly and adamantly opposed Donald Russell forever after that. The phone rang, and I picked it up and, lo and behold, the shock was it was Maurice Bessinger. His remarks were, "Bob, do you want to be a hero tomorrow?" I said, "Well, I don't know Maurice. What do I have to do?" He said, "Don't appoint that s.o.b. when you get sworn in." [laughter] That was my first introduction to getting sworn in the next day and the first advice I think I got. [chuckles]

One of the first duties the governor has is to appoint the chief of law enforcement. The chief of SLED [State Law Enforcement Division] has to be appointed by the governor. So my second official action was to appoint Chief [J.P.] Strom, reappoint him as chief of law enforcement, and I did that for several reasons. I did it because we were heading into a very difficult period of time, and I wanted everybody to know. There'd been some discussions prior to Mr. Russell coming in whether Pete Strom would be reappointed or not, and it went through several months. The law enforcement people got upset, the sheriffs got upset, and I didn't want any of that. So I just immediately wanted to make it clear that Pete Strom was

my chief, and I wanted to make it clearer that he was going to be chief of law enforcement in South Carolina. We'd had some problems of who was in charge, and we'd had some beginning difficulties with some of the local police getting a little rough in some circumstances. I thought by doing this it would be clear to everybody that Pete Strom was the governor's chief, and I thought that would let people know what I thought of him, the confidence I had in him. I wanted to emphasize, too, for everybody that he was going to be chief. Katherine Wolfe was my first staff person appointed and the first female, executive-level staff member. I appointed her administrative assistant, and she and I started out in the governor's office as we had started out in going through the lieutenant governor's office.

CBG: Where did you start? Did you have a game plan in your mind, or again did this just evolve with experience?

REM: Please, I did, but it evolved, and I was always a person that did that. I always believed in letting things evolve, and they would work better than if you had a master plan although in my own mind I knew how I wanted to operate. I had seen enough, being in the legislature for twelve years and being lieutenant governor, to know that there was much that could be done. I had a strong feeling that one of the biggest problems we had was the lack of communications and coordination and cooperation. I had seen that. There was really no communication, and, as a result of that, there was no coordination of effort among state agencies, governmental agencies and there was no cooperation because you had to have one to have the other. So I think I set out right in the beginning to say that this was going to be one of communication and that we were going to communicate. We were going to sit down and talk about our problems, going to be a "we" administration, and "we" were going to solve our problems. They weren't mine or their's. To me, that was very simple. You know, it was just so simple that didn't look on it as being anything so great, but it turned out to be the cornerstone of my whole administration.

CBG: Let me ask a general question. I was wondering if you could offer some views as to how this kind of thing happens in state government. Is that a tradition in South Carolina?

REM: I think it was. We sort of prided ourselves on having independence, and we didn't want to break that down. You recall the big battle over the highway department back during the Olin Johnston–Ben Sawyer days for control of the Highway Department. The legislature then took the governor on and separated the highway department, almost, from government and made it an autonomous, self-perpetuating agency, and the legislature said, "We're going to elect the members of the commission." They created a very powerful commissioner to run that department. I think, coming from that, departments with their separate boards, in

addition to being normally bureaucratic and very jealous and zealous of what they were doing, didn't want anybody else meddling. They had that feeling of independence and autonomy from others.

I remember in the legislature when we were always refereeing the battle between the health and social service agencies. I never understood why we had social workers who would take the blind people for the Department of Welfare to the doctors of the Medical College but would not take a blind person who was under Voc. Rehab. They said, "No, that's not us. That's not our job." So we had to then hire people and pay people because Voc. Rehab. didn't have social workers. We had to go out and literally pay members of the community to drive those under Voc. Rehabilitation to the doctor. I couldn't understand that, and I never understood why a social worker who worked for one state agency didn't consider their work for the state of South Carolina and would take six people whether they were under the supervision of one agency or the other. We had a big effort to create a separate blind commission, which we ended up doing. I didn't think we really needed or should have done that. I thought we should have blended that under Voc. Rehabilitation. The reason we had to create one is because they were under Welfare, and Welfare looked on them as Welfare, and they didn't want to be Welfare. They wanted work. They wanted a job running a little vending operation somewhere or something like that and resented being, as they put it, in the handout category. Had we taken them from Welfare and put them with Voc. Rehabilitation as a division, we wouldn't have a blind commission today that's been in constant controversy. Although I supported them once they were created, I resisted that creation.

You know, Welfare and Mental Health were fighting all the time because Welfare had all the government programs, and they wouldn't qualify the folks in the mental institutions who were over sixty-five for benefits because they were in a state place. That was then, what, two-thirds or up as high as eighty percent of the cost. I couldn't understand that and I wanted to sit down with [Dr. William] Bill Hall and Arthur Rivers and say, "What's going on? If you qualify those people sixty-five and older in mental health, that would mean eighty percent or sixty-six or whatever it was percent of the money would come through the federal, and you wouldn't have to come ask us, Doctor Hall for three million dollars more this year. So we did that. It took us a year of constant harassment on the part of the governor, meeting in the governor's office conference room where I could sit in and monitor to get those two agencies to get together where the Welfare would qualify and certify the hospital out there as being an eligible recipient of those kinds of people.

CBG: Thinking about governors now, a lot of people are awestruck and think of governors as commanders. But in the three C's you mentioned a little bit ago, I noticed Command was replaced perhaps more by a persuasive Communicate, Coordinate, and Cooperate. Is that the nature of the office that the governor in fact . . . ?

REM: That is the nature in this state, particularly because you don't have the power to command. The governor of this state doesn't appoint the department heads. They do not serve at his will. So he cannot replace them. He does appoint members of the boards and commissions. However, they are appointed on staggered terms, and it was purposely set up so that no governor would get a shot at all of them. I did. I was the first person to get a shot at everybody because then none other than the Pardon and Parole Board had terms beyond six years. Most were set up at six, four, two to rotate around the four-year governor. So I had a shot at all of them, and I think that gave me a little more influence than I would normally have had because everybody assumed I was going to be a six-year governor. You had to use your persuasion, and that wasn't bad, but it was awfully frustrating. There were times when I wished we could have had the power to command. It would have shortened things up, I think I might have accomplished more in a shorter period of time.

CBG: There's a myth in the public mind that the governor, in effect, gives orders to state agency heads.

REM: The governor's power in South Carolina really comes--and I think I may have found it and recognized it and used it more than anybody prior to me--as chairman of the Budget and Control Board. It became a stronger function as we went along, the reason being that we developed a budgeting process that was a little deeper and a little better than had been previously been done, and we worked harder to submit that budget and to get that budget through the General Assembly. So, we were writing the budget and developing it more than had previously been done, and the legislature was taking that budget and working with it. In the past the Ways and Means Committee would get together and take the Budget and Control Board report and let it gather dust and develop their own.

CBG: Was the budget under way when you became governor?

REM: Well, a budget was in the final stages when I went in. I've often said that I think the General Assembly both felt sorry for me and also demonstrated a feeling of warmth and cooperation by sitting down--and we sat down together with the leadership from the House and Senate and talked about it and worked it out--and adopting the appropriations bill that year for one of the few times in my memory without either a conference or free conference committee. We were able to get the House and Senate together and get the Senate to then adjust it to where the House could go along with it, and they both agreed without a conference or a free conference. I took that as being a gesture of good will on their part, and I think that sort of started us off on a feeling of cooperation.

CBG: Did you make a plea for this kind of thing in your inaugural remarks or swearing-in remarks?

REM: My swearing-in remarks were very brief, and what I wanted to do was to sort of set the tone that this was going to be a “we” administration and that we were going to communicate and we were going to try to improve state government by cooperating and coordinating our efforts. I was really looking for cooperation from the General Assembly and all people in government to work together, to move the state forward. So it was pitched on that and trying to set a high tone in about five or ten minutes at the most, for what we were going to try to accomplish and how we were going to try to do it.

CBG: Did you have . . .

REM: Nothing specific. No spelling out of any programs or anything. It was just a tone-setting, the approach that we wanted to take.

CBG: Did you have a big reception, or did you go right back to work?

REM: Well, we necessarily had a lot of friends who crowded in, and we had nothing but we walked out and stood in the lobby and shook hands for about--it seemed like three hours with everybody who was there to wish us well. A group of our friends had a luncheon over at the Wade Hampton Hotel for several hundred who had been gathered together very quickly, sort of my leaders in my campaign and particularly a lot of the government departments, constitutional officers, the officials. Very quiet, nothing formal.

CBG: Where did the idea of breakfasting with the constitutional officers come in?

REM: Well, I think that had developed over a period of time. I had always been friendly with them. I'd always felt that they were a neglected source and even though we didn't have a cabinet, that they could and should be brought in to what was going on and that they could be very valuable to the governor as an advisory group and that they ought to know what's happening. People expected them to know when they traveled around the state. So I thought it would be good if I met with them on a regular basis for breakfast and shared with them what was happening, what we were trying to accomplish in the state and also heard from them, you know, their reactions to what I was trying to do plus things they were interested in or suggestions that they had or recommendations that they had. It proved to be very worthwhile. I got a lot more out of it than they did though they seemed to appreciate it very much and joined in very openly and freely in discussions. So again it was part of the “we” doing this.

CBG: When did you extend the meetings to include all the agency heads?

REM: Well, I thought that again, following my swearing-in, one of the first things I wanted to do was to have a meeting with all the department and agency heads to talk to them about this same thing. That we together could accomplish a great deal but we just weren't going to do much alone. We had all this confronting us and all these problems staring at us, all the federal programs coming. I was faced with the decision of designating the agency or department that was going to get that money. In the past when that happened, they had taken that money and used it only for them, but in the future, if I designated an agency, you knew it was going to be a coordinating agency, and they were going to simply be the ones to handle it for everybody in that related service group. So, I wanted to meet with all of them to talk about that, to make them feel that they had just as much responsibility as I had, and that together we were going to get things done.

Also I talked about the fact that we were going to form interagency councils, and we were going to meet regularly, and I was going to meet with them because I wanted to know what was going on, and I also wanted to talk with them about working together and coordinating their effort in getting more done that way. So that was one of the first things we did, to have the constitutional officers, then to have all of the department and agency heads. Following that, then I decided I needed the chairmen of the boards, so I extended that to include the department heads and the chairmen of the boards and commissions.

CBG: Did you get a positive reaction?

REM: I got a very positive reaction. I had some skeptics, particularly some of the old ones. I'm not sure that Dr. Rivers thought well of it to start with. He was one of the finest men I've ever known, one of the most conscientious, but he had run his department himself without help from anybody and didn't particularly like somebody meddling with it. Bill Hall out at Mental Health was a very powerful fellow who usually came, you know, with a crisis and a sort of overpowering crisis. He needed millions or, you know, things were going to collapse. We wanted to get away from that kind of crisis reaction. I said I want to know when we're going to have a crisis six months ahead, not two hours ahead, and that was the reason we were going to sit around and talk about these things. So I got a positive response, and I got it from the people I needed it from.

I'll never forget Ellis McDougall, who was then head of the Department of Corrections. He just got up and warmly endorsed it because Ellis needed Social Services and all these people, and he was one receptive to all of them, and one of the first things we did as you know, was to put the adult education

program in the Department of Corrections. Why it had never been there I don't know, and with that put the vocational program out in the Department of Education and put it in through there. We didn't create something in Corrections to do it. Ken East and his group went out there and started the adult literacy program. They went into TEC [Technical Education] with the adult literacy program. We didn't have to start a separate adult literacy program for Technical Education, which would have been the normal procedure in the past, to let them hire an adult education director. We said no, the Department of Education has that responsibility, federal money's going to them, but they're going to use it for all of these programs. The same thing with vocational education. Vocational Ed. had been assigned and got all of the monies coming from the federal government and they wouldn't share a nickel with anybody. We had a battle even to the point of court action, almost. It was friendly, but I took money away from them in the state budget because they wouldn't share federal funds. We'd take money away and give to TEC until we forced them to get together and have a state plan, and then we started funneling it back. But there were some tough battles.

CBG: Yes.

REM: I mean some strong resistance. People just didn't want anybody interfering, and they felt it was their program and their money, and we had some pretty strong sessions. [Patrick C.] Pat Smith was a stalwart. Pat applauded it and made it work because he was the pencil man, and they all respected Pat Smith more than they did the governor until they found out that the Budget and Control Board could function also and that the governor was going to have some influence in writing the budget. If we didn't get cooperation, we'd just shift money.

CBG: Now Mr. Smith was not on your staff, is that true?

REM: No. Pat Smith had been on the Budget and Control Board staff and had left to take the Educational Finance Commission directorship under Dr. Crow. So he had helped develop the plan and administer all the school construction and transportation programs. Thus, he had been so deeply involved in education until he was knowledgeable. His uncle Jim Smith, had been head of the Budget and Control Board for as long as I could ever remember, and he retired. When he retired, we then brought Pat back over to the Budget and Control Board to be the director of the Budget and Control Board staff. They called him state auditor, which was a misnomer, and that was in the reorganization way back years ago when they consolidated. So he was state auditor really but secretary and Director of the Budget and Control Board. Interestingly, shortly after I went in, I had another crisis occur because Jeff Bates, who had been long time state treasurer and was the man responsible for the triple A credit rating in this state really, the most respected state treasurer in this

country, a strong, wonderful person, powerful fellow, respected nationwide, was the bible when it came to state finances and all, had a heart attack and died over in the Wade Hampton Hotel having lunch one day. You know that shook me as a new governor. He was really part of the foundation of state government. So we were trying to decide what we could do and what we wanted to do, and Grady Patterson, who I had borrowed from the Attorney General's office to be my legal assistant in the interim period, was coming over and working with me. Grady had been counsel assigned to Jeff Bates from the Attorney General's Office, like we assign assistants and had worked with Jeff Bates on all the stuff Jeff was doing and probably was as knowledgeable as anybody. But he was young and unknown, and we knew the experiences that others had had, that the worst thing politically would be to appoint him and then have him stand for election and let everybody shoot at him. I needed to maintain stability in government. So I brought Pat Smith's uncle, Jim Smith, back and appointed him to serve the unexpired term of Mr. Bates with the understanding and knowledge that he wasn't interested in running. During that time we groomed Grady to run, and we all supported him very strongly and actively, and that's where he got into the race and how he emerged as state treasurer.

CBG: We were talking about the staff, and we'd appointed Chief Strom and . . .

REM: Katherine Wolfe.

CBG: . . . and Mrs. Wolfe, and now we've learned about Mr. Patterson working as a part-time . . .

REM: Part-time.

CBG: . . . legal assistant. What other staff decisions . . .?

REM: Well, those were the first, and we ran like that as we tried to assemble. I really had to have a news secretary. Then, everything was happening. We were in the middle of all the developing civil rights problems in the state, and I had to have more than what had been normally in that office, a newspaper reporter. I needed a spokesman. I needed somebody who could not only issue press releases, write speeches, but who could be a spokesman for the governor's office. I got bombarded in the beginning. "Please get a strong staff. Please get some people that we can work with." Mr. Blatt bombarded me on the way home the first weekend, the first time I rode home with him as I was fixing to get into the office real well, and saying, "what you really need is somebody like Bob Hickman," who was then news director for WIS. Bob had

developed quite a good image and reputation. People respected him. He was very solid and sound. The General Assembly had great confidence and respect for him.

END OF SIDE TWO