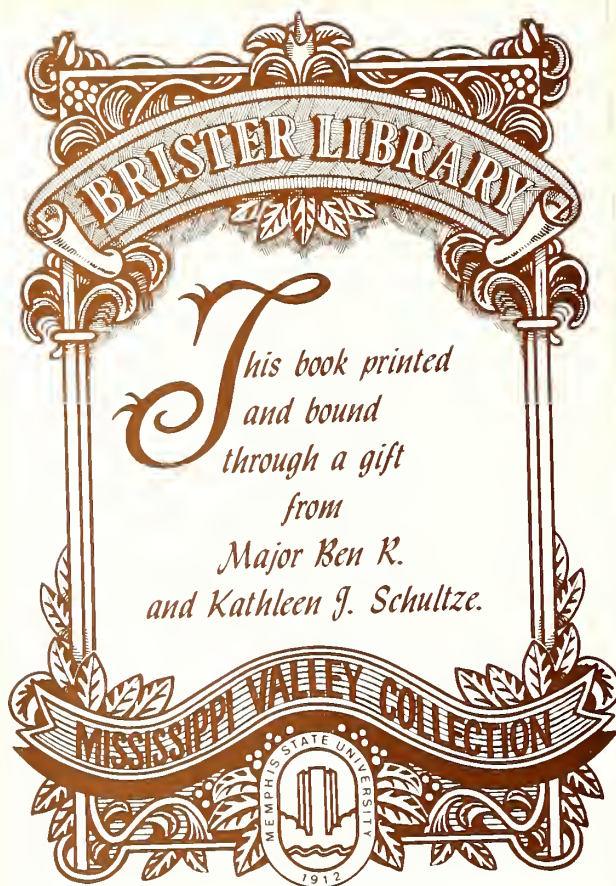


AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE RECENT TENNESSEE POLITICAL HISTORY
INTERVIEW WITH
MR. ED TURRENTINE

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER - CAROL LANEY AND BETTY WILLIAMS
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



25539257 OHT 3/20/92




**MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES**

MVC
JK
5225
1977
T87

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS LIBRARIES



3 2109 00698 9827



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

<http://archive.org/details/oralhistoryofrec00craw>



AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE RECENT TENNESSEE POLITICAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW WITH MR. ED TURRENTINE

JULY 30, 1977

BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBER - CAROL LANEY AND BETTY WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY.
THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF RECENT TENNESSEE POLITICAL HISTORY."
THE PLACE IS NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS JULY 30, 1977. THE INTER-
VIEW IS WITH MR. ED TURRENTINE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAW-
FORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH
OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY CAROL LANEY AND BETTY WILLIAMS.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Turrentine, before I ask you about Mr. Crump
in the early days, I'd like to have some biograph-
ical information from you.

MR. TURRENTINE: I was born the youngest of four children from
Spencer Daniel Turrentine and Ida Hunt Turren-
tine. I was born December 16, 1910. I finished the eighth grade in six
years and went six months to Central High School with Ben West who became
mayor. I broke my back three times on the ice delivering milk and the
doctors told me I had to make a living another way so I got started in
the real estate business in 1943 in which I still am active daily.

DR. CRAWFORD: You had been successful in your milk business
before you gave that up, hadn't you, Mr. Turren-
tine?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, I started out driving a truck seven
days a week for \$80 a month and I went from
that to Superintendent of 23 milk routes. Sixteen men and I were draw-
ing during World War II, from \$800 to \$900 a month, much more money than



a lot of the bankers were making.

DR. CRAWFORD: When you started in real estate, did you start at this location where you are now on Nolensville Road?

MR. TURRENTINE: I started on the Nolensville Road, but I first started to work for another company uptown on Union Street and I saw that I couldn't make it so I borrowed \$10,000 from First American National Bank and came to Woodfine to start Turrentine Realty Company on its own.

DR. CRAWFORD: And have you been here since that time?

MR. TURRENTINE: In one, two, three locations on Nolensville Pike since that time. I've just been in this little office for the last three years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, if you started in '43, you have been in business in real estate about 34 years or so, haven't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: In July, yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: And during that time you have been very active in real estate activities, haven't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, I have had the pleasure of having the Realtor of the Year Award, the President of the Nashville Board, the President of the Tennessee Board and served on the Washington Committee for three years, all except two months. In November of '63 my wife died the day Kennedy was killed and I never did



go back to the meetings again. In '64 they gave me a Omegaton Medal which is the fraternity of the Real Estate Boards.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have also been appointed to some responsible positions on boards by people in city and state government, haven't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: I was sworn one of the first men in Nashville, sworn in to buy property for the urban renewal or slum clearance or housing authority, whichever the people know it as. I lost my first card and my second card is dated February 2, 1960, signed by Gerald Gimmery.

DR. CRAWFORD: And is from the Nashville Housing Authority.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, of whom I have a right to buy still, if they need it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Nashville has been a leader in the purchase of such lands, It is certainly far ahead of Memphis in that. It got an early start and has done more in rebuilding its downtown area.

MR. TURRENTINE: I'm sorry that the highway was designed to go through Overton Park there and I'm sorry that it's upheld the highway as much as it is. I believe there should be something worked out either over or under because our highways are going to become obsolete before they are complete.

DR. CRAWFORD: And they also are having to have a good deal of repair before they are completed.

to have a very high degree of accuracy in the
which is the subject of the present study.
The results of the study are as follows:

1. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.
2. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.

3. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.
4. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.

5. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.
6. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.

7. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.
8. The results of the study show that the
accuracy of the results is very high.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. I may not make many friends by saying this, but I believe that overloading trucks is not helping our highways any.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, something is breaking them up and I'm sure it is not the cars.

MR. TURRENTINE: Dr. Crawford, the amazing thing to me here is, my daddy told me that we had to work and make more than we spend and I don't understand any phase of government that realizes that you can't spend more than you take in. But your city, your state, and your Federal government pay no attention to what they take in. They just spend what they want to. And then they adjust taxes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Often you don't have business principles given much consideration in government activities.

MR. TURRENTINE: I don't see why that being Governor of the State of Tennessee shouldn't be the best business man of the biggest business in the state.

DR. CRAWFORD: It is when you consider the dollars that's involved in it. I don't know how much it is now but I know. . .

MR. TURRENTINE: It's too many.

DR. CRAWFORD: It's an extremely large budget.

MR. TURRENTINE: And the thing that I am very much concerned about--not me at 67 years old--but I am concerned very much for my grandchildren and great grandchildren, of what they will have to do. I am neither a Democrat nor a Republican. I am going to vote for the man that I think does the best job. Because as I work on commission basis myself, I think a man that does the most



work will be paid. The reason that I am in the real estate business, nobody would pay me what I thought I was worth.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you have a good deal of independence then in selecting who you want to support.

MR. TURRENTINE: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: If you do it on that basis. And most of your early association was in the Democratic Party, wasn't it?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. My Dad, I guess he would kick the slats out in the coffin if he thought I voted Republican, but I have many times and would again.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, at that time the Republican Party was not very active in Tennessee, you know. It really didn't get reformed and able to be very effective in the state level until you get into about the Eisenhower Administration.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Mr. Eisenhower was a fine general and a fine man to me and I had the pleasure of eating lunch with Mr. Eisenhower, also Mr. Truman, also Mr. Johnson, and also Mr. Nixon of whom I have a great respect. And Mr. Truman and Mr. Eisenhower--Mr. Truman is a man that I thought very highly of because when he thought something he said it.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was one of the most outspoken presidents we have ever had, I suppose. And his reputation has improved since his death, you know.

MR. TURRENTINE: And I have often wondered what the thing would have been in Cuba when Kennedy started the



stuff there with Castro, if had it been Truman, I think it would have ended in a day or two. He would have told them to get his grapes clean or watch the apples fall and they would have fallen. Because he didn't quote something that he didn't mean.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, we have not had one like Harry Truman for a while.

MR. TURRENTINE: They threw away the pattern.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think they did.

MR. TURRENTINE: Cordell Hull and Harry Truman and old Joe Burns, our Sixth District Congressman back in those days and Mr. Ed Crump from Memphis. Well, we don't have those kind of men now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I want to get around to Mr. Crump but for the moment let me ask first about Congressman Burns. What sort of political leader was he in the state?

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, he was back in the horse and buggy days, as I call it here. He would make a trip from Washington. Of course, he had to then by train and my daddy would pick him up at the delivery stable and he would go out through the country and he would speak at the different stores on Saturday night and he would find out what people wanted and what the majority wanted and he never had any opposition.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what years was he in office?

MR. TURRENTINE: Let me see, Doctor, that was at least fifty years ago or better.



DR. CRAWFORD: So that would have been about the 20s or 30s?

MR. TURRENTINE:: Back in the 20s. I learned a great lesson from Joe Burns because he carried chewing gum for children, then. I heard him tell my daddy, "If you will give the children, the women and your mother, I'll make you do anything I want you to."

DR. CRAWFORD: And he represented the Nashville District for quite a while in Congress.

MR. TURRENTINE: Sixth District. Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's right, that was the old sixth back when Tennessee had about ten congressional districts, didn't it?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Joe Burns was a high type man. Then his son was elected on his father's name and he wasn't the same type person and he didn't last.

DR. CRAWFORD: And then since that time, the Nashville District, which is now the Fifth, has had several people in it.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Mr. Lorreal Fulton was a fine gentleman and he died with leukemia, I believe it was. And his brother Dick (Richard Fulton) filled out his unexpired time and was reelected each time until he became mayor of Metropolitan Nashville which he now serves.

DR. CRAWFORD: And since that time, of course, you've had another member of Congress from Nashville in

the seat that Richard Fulton held before.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, that was Clifford Allen. Clifford Allen was Tax Assessor here and I will have to say in my business, Clifford Allen ran one of the smoothest, best offices, best complete offices--one of the best. Like Mr. Rookers' office, well all of the offices in the Metropolitan office, I think ran exceptionally well by their members. One office, the Register's office, I remember three generations of running that office, the Wilsons'--Felix Wilson and then his boy and now Felix III is head of it--Register of Deeds. They are topnotch.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, let's see, at the time you are talking about when you were getting acquainted with things in the '20s, Nashville was a lot different than what it is today. You did not have so many families and I suppose you knew all of them, didn't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: I think so. I was born nine miles from the public square and between my house and the public square there were three drug stores. In prohibition, if you had sickness the doctors would prescribe whiskey just like they would anything else. You would go to the drug store to buy it. And my Daddy had to go to Second and Broad to buy whiskey for me when Dr. Hollard Tigard told him I had to have it for pneumonia. I won't say there wasn't plenty of home made whiskey and wine and home-brew etc. during the prohibition but legally there wasn't.



This part of the country was known as dairy farming but by individuals. All of those dairy farms now have been developed into subdivisions and even where my daddy and I milked cows and went broke during the Depression is developed now into \$50,000 and \$60,000 homes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, being in real estate business you've had a great deal to do with that growth and development, haven't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: I have tried. Yes sir, I've developed five subdivisions. I go in more for commercial property because I think that people need not to have to drive a hundred miles or fifty miles to buy something if they can go four miles and buy anything they need.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that is one of the things you notice in the changes around Nashville--that you really do have a lot of business centers around the city, whereas when you started back in 1910 everything was downtown, wasn't it?

MR. TURRENTINE: Right. I got three parking tickets one day by sitting beside Montgomery Ward so I decided to get out of Nashville and get out on the highway where I could leave my car all day.

DR. CRAWFORD: And now the city has caught up with you.

MR. TURRENTINE: I am in the city now, yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well let's see, you were acquainted with Cordell Hull too, weren't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: I have met Mr. Hull and been to the meetings with Mr. Hull at the State of Tennessee Fairgrounds and also old Will Rogers. I worked for Morgan Wilkerson



at Sealtest Milk Company. Mr. Morgan Wilkerson would have a fish fry every year on his farm on Old Hickory Boulevard. And I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Ed Crump and frying fish for him for two years straight running and thought a great deal of him and he was never too busy to shake hands with a man that was greasy from frying fish. He acted like I was just as good as he was.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what year would that have been?

MR. TURRENTINE: The best of my memory, that was either '39,'40, or '41, two of those years.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was back about the time that he had finished his career in Congress and had already gotten back to Memphis. Well did he make it a practice to have the fish fry, was that an annual event?

MR. TURRENTINE: Mr. Morgan Wilkinson, I believe had three of them and he asked me if I would help him fry fish, two of them. And by him being a good boss of mine I was happy to do anything he wanted me to do.

DR. CRAWFORD: How had he known Mr. Crump?

MR. TURRENTINE: That I do not know. He just told us all that worked at the fish fry that Mr. Crump was a friend of his and he was going to be there and he wanted us all to meet him. And he introduced him.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what size were the fish fries; did a lot of people come to them?



MR. TURRENTINE: I would say there would be 250, at least.

They would be from all over the state of Tennessee and some out of the state.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, you would have been about 30 years old at the time.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: What impression did you have? Do you remember the first time you saw Mr. Crump? What did he look like?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, he shook hands with me and his little eyes just danced and he would look you straight in the eye and from that day on until today, I have been scared of anybody that won't look at you straight in the eye. I don't want to see a man wearing dark glasses and I don't want to see a man writing notes and handing them to me. If he's got something to say to me I want him to say it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, I was trying to remember how old Mr. Crump would have been then. He had white hair at that time?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: How was he dressed? How did he look?

MR. TURRENTINE: He was dressed in a white suit and sharp as a tack.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, a fish fry came in the summer, didn't it?

MR. TURRENTINE: That's right. But he was fully dressed. So many had sport clothes on and this was two fish fries with

no alcohol served. There was just plenty of food and friendship and everybody had a good time. I was amazed at Mr. Crump in his position of shaking hands with a man that drove a milk truck.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he seem to get around and shake hands with everyone?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. There wasn't anybody that wasn't good enough for him to shake hands with.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did people seem to react to him?

MR. TURRENTINE: Everybody seemed to be crazy about him here.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he had a lot of folks in Memphis too, you know.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, because I went to Memphis and I would have to say that Mr. Crump had better alleys than we had streets at that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: You did get the impression that he took care of Memphis well?

MR. TURRENTINE: I know he did because I had some friends that would tell me that they would go in his office and ask for help and he would tell them what he would do and if he couldn't get a job for them he would help them otherwise until there was a job available. But he did like for people to work. As he told me he liked for people to work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you know at the present time Nashville is doing a lot better than Memphis in streets and municipal works, but at that time you really felt that Memphis was ahead?



MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. At that time Memphis was far ahead from us with the width of the streets.

And they had no potholes in them, but they all had paved alleys.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were not paved in Nashville then?

MR. TURRENTINE: No sir. Of course, I think Nashville is the Garden Spot of the world, naturally by being here, but my children live in Memphis and I go down quite frequent and it's still nice.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, of course your first contacts with Memphis were in the Crump Era.

MR. TURRENTINE: That's right.

DR. CRAWFORD: Other than the streets what--

MR. TURRENTINE: The zoo there which has been very controversial in the I-40 loop, I wish could be settled.

DR. CRAWFORD: Other than the streets, what impressions did you get of Memphis when you first saw it?

MR. TURRENTINE: One of the cleanest cities that I ever was in. It has always amazed me how anybody else could beat them out of being the clean city and the beautiful flowers, the beautiful azaleas and everything. Of course that's the difference in the temperature there and here and towards Knoxville. But we have so much in Tennessee that nobody has ever seen---so many parks.

DR. CRAWFORD: There are a lot of different parks around the grand divisions in the state that are worth seeing, you know, just a lot of good things in all three grand



divisions of the state. Did you feel this cleanliness and order in the city of Memphis was something Mr. Crump had been able to do?

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, his understudies told me that the Boss said it had to be done was the way they put it to me and I took it for granted that he meant it by the way he looked at men when I talked to him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he had a habit of riding around town with a notebook and when he saw anything that needed doing, a street light out, grass in the the street, he'd make note (about it) and have it done.

MR. TURRENTINE: And he knew who to call to have it done and he wasn't long about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did people in Nashville in general feel about Mr. Crump?

MR. TURRENTINE: There were a lot of mixed emotions about Mr. Crump. Some thought he was too much of a boss and some thought he was this and that and the other. But regardless of what anybody thought, I thought that Mr. Crump was a nice fellow, a fine fellow and one that could--I always say that if you can if it don't make any difference whether you do a job or somebody else does it, just get the job done. Henry Ford once said that he didn't know how far it was to a certain place, that's what he paid that lawyer for was to send him a road map and make his reservation.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Mr. Crump had plenty of lawyers and other people to do things like that. How did he seem



to get along with the political leaders in Nashville that you knew?

MR. TURRENTINE: Fine. Tom Cummings, Mr. Joe Carr, and we had a beer distributor who was one of my milk customers, Mr. John Little. He owned a beer distributor in the Watkins Institute at the Stock Yard. I called him Captain Johnny and I waited on him and he died a few years back. Mr. Johnny was about the same size man as Mr. Crump but he was very fond of him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, when did you get acquainted with Mr. Joe Carr?

MR. TURRENTINE: Oh, Lordy--

DR. CRAWFORD: You both go back quite a while I know.

MR. TURRENTINE: Joe wouldn't want me to say how long we've known one another I don't imagine.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'll be talking with him later.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, you ask him, I think it was back in the 30's. It was before World War II.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know he dealt with Mr. Crump back in these days we were talking about also.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, and he gave me the impression that he was very fond of him.

MR. CRAWFORD: Well, they both had a good deal of responsibility in state politics even then.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. And Mr. Joe Carr has up until the last eighteen months, been very active in the state.



DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I was invited to his retirement dinner,
I believe it was last summer, fall perhaps,
but I was not able to come up to Nashville.

MR. TURRENTINE: The last time that I attended a dinner with
Mr. Carr was at the Tennessee Gator Bowl game
in Jacksonville, Florida, when Tennessee went down there and Mr. Dickey
gave the ball game away.

DR. CRAWFORD: You also have been acquainted with a number of
other Tennessee political leaders. I believe
you are a friend of the Clement family, Frank and Annabelle.

MR. TURRENTINE: I was talking with Frank on Thursday for an
hour-before he was killed on Tuesday at the Third
National Bank.

DR. CRAWFORD: How did you become acquainted with him and what
did you think of him as a Tennessee political
leader?

MR. TURRENTINE: I will have to say that everybody that knew
Frank liked him. If they didn't I don't think
it was his fault because I think Frank Clement did more for the state,
for the teachers and for the state employees, the blind school and dif-
ferent ones than any others. I have a sister retired from teaching
school and she says that he did more for the school teachers than every
other governor put together. However, she thinks a lot of Mr. Dunn who
was a Republican but again I go back to the man not the party.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, they both did a good deal. Of course,
you knew Governor Clement as a person. What



do you think of him as an orator or public speaker?

MR. TURRENTINE: My personal feelings, there was nobody that could talk like Frank Clement unless it would be Billy Graham to hold the attention of all ages.

DR. CRAWFORD: On what occasions did you get to hear him speak? Did you hear him make many speeches?

MR. TURRENTINE: I heard him make many speeches here and then he made the speech in Washington at the Democratic--what was that meeting he held?

DR. CRAWFORD: There was a nominating convention of the Democratic Party. I can't remember whether it was '52 '56.

MR. TURRENTINE: I don't remember which one it was but I heard every word of it and enjoyed it because that's why I thought so much of Frank. I remember I got a card one morning and I opened it up and it said that I was a Colonel on the Tennessee Staff and I called him and I said, "Frank, I opened a card and it says that I am a Colonel". He said, "That's right Ed". I said, "Well, if I am a Colonel they haven't got much of an army." He said, "If I had thought so I wouldn't have sent it to you".

DR. CRAWFORD: That's good.

MR. TURRENTINE: I took Frank an antique clock for his new home on Franklin Road and he put his arm around me and there was about twenty-five people in the house and he said, "I want you all to know Ed Turrentine and he has always supported me and been one of my favorites and he never asked me to as much as to tear up



a parking ticket." I never asked him for any favor. I've had Miss Annabelle at my house for country ham breakfast and Annabelle is just as plain as an old shoe. She told me, "Ed, I'm coming in barefoot because it's raining because I'm a country girl". I talked to Annabelle two weeks ago and she's Annabelle Clement O'Brien now. I think Annabelle was a big help to Frank and Ellington when everybody accused them of having that leap frog jump--one and then one and then one and then one--I think Annabelle was doing more running the state than either men because they were out finding out what to do. And I think Mr. Clement laid out everything for Buford to follow is the impression that I got.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, she is a very capable person. I've heard her speak.

MR. TURRENTINE: You better bet your dollar she knows what she's doing. And I think with the Women's Lib making the progress it's made in the last few years that if she ran for governor with her experience in the Governor's chair, my opinion she would get a lot of votes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I think she would be a very good one if she could get elected.

MR. TURRENTINE: She'd make a good one if she could be elected.

DR. CRAWFORD: But she is a woman and she knows what the Tennessee traditions are so she might support someone else such as her nephew, Bob.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes, I talked with Annabelle about that the other day and I told her to please not let Bob get in this race. Because this one coming up, to me it would hurt him.



He's doing a good job where he is and let him keep doing that job for another four years and see what happens. I do feel like if Mr. Dunn would run this time with the past experience of the present governor, I don't know but what he would be elected.

DR. CRAWFORD: I agree with you I think he probably will not, but I think he probably could. You knew Frank Clement about all of his public life, didn't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. A lot of people did not like Mr. Clement because they said he had trouble with alcohol and all but I will have to say that I was welcome in his office and I am proud to be carrying in my pocket a state seal that Frank made for me on the old hand press--there it is Doctor. And I wouldn't take money for it. I know it's no good, but to me Frank made that on the old hand press, of which I wouldn't take anything for.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it has a lot of sentimental value, doesn't it?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, it does.

DR. CRAWFORD: Something made by the governor and one of the well-known governors of Tennessee, too. How did crowds react when he spoke?

MR. TURRENTINE: You could hear a pin drop. They listened there wasn't any rowdy booing and going on. They listened to Frank Clement.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was it about his speeches that made them so effective?



MR. TURRENTINE: His delivery, best, clearly.

DR. CRAWFORD: What was good about his delivery?

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, he just--maybe I thought a lot of him--
you know we think a lot of our children maybe
because they are our children, but Frank Clement was my governor.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you know how people reacted to his
speeches though, so I think you are right about
that. He has a reputation as being one of the best in recent times.

MR. TURRENTINE: I say the only other man to me that has ever
stacked with him is Billy Graham. And I am
not a Baptist but I think a lot of Billy Graham and I want to help him
every year because he has done a lot of good.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, do you think that their speaking style
was a lot alike?

MR. TURRENTINE: I think that Frank was superior to Billy.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think so? What was different
about his speaking?

MR. TURRENTINE: He never wanted for the right word. I don't
know why.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he have to use notes when he spoke?

MR. TURRENTINE: No. He just rared his head back and shook it
and it just rolled out just like a Victrola
and his eyes danced just like--by being part Indian myself, I liked
him because he would look you straight in the eyes and they would still
be dancing.

DR. CRAWFORD: Sort of like Boss Crump?



MR. TURRENTINE: Oh, yes Boss Crump didn't shake his head.

He looked at you. It was the biggest pleasure of my life, being a country boy and not going to school and all to be able to meet and see the people that I have met. And had the pleasure of meeting people like Fats Everett and all of the senators and congressman from everywhere and being in the Senate in Washington as I went every month for 34 months. The reason I never did go back, my wife died the day Kennedy was killed in '63 and I never did go back.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I believe people in Tennessee have judged individuals more by what they've done than where they went to school or for how long. Evidentially, you have been appreciated by quite a few leaders in the state, judging from the things I see on your wall. I see some members of Congress.

MR. TURRENTINE: I served on the Fire Codes Bill the whole thirteen years that Beverly Briley was mayor and then when the Cole Lead Tremble Company came into Nashville to make the tax assessments, Clifford Allen was Tax Assessor then and John Wilson, head of the Tax Equalization Board, asked me if I would come up there and help them straighten out this end of town. As they thought I had been out here as long as I had, I knew more about values than the people from Minnesota or wherever they came from, Pennsylvania. I went up and did the best job I could, but I would not have anything to do with anything with any property of my own, mine or my nephews. I turned that over to other people.

DR. CRAWFORD: In order to avoid conflicts of interest?

MR. TURRENTINE: I didn't want anybody to say that I had any influence on any of my own property or my nephews' property. I want to do what is right and I have gotten by now this long without ever having a dollar given to me and I don't expect it now. I carry a two dollar bill with me to where if anybody ever finds anybody I beat out of a dollar, I carry it for that purpose to give it to him.

DR. CRAWFORD: You'll give them two dollars.

MR. TURRENTINE: I'll give them this two dollar bill for anybody that comes in and says that I've beat them out of a dollar. I have had a beautiful life because I've had a wonderful wife and the girl that worked for me for seventeen years was a wonderful secretary and a year after my wife died, I married her and she has been my wife now over twelve years and she's good to me. I've had five heart attacks and double pneumonia thirteen times but I feel like the good Lord is leaving me here for some reason. I don't know but I am going to do something for somebody every day that I am able to walk.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it seems that as long as you are around Mr. Turrentine, you are going to be doing something.

MR. TURRENTINE: It's a pleasure.

DR. CRAWFORD: What changes have you seen take place in Nashville now during your adult life?

MR. TURRENTINE: It would take three weeks to tell them all. Because during prohibition it was several places



in Nashville where if you were able to get up on one of those tall stools and had a quarter that was your ID card to buy anything from dope to white lightning to pure grain alcohol and select beer. I was glad to see beer and whiskey come back because it was much better than what was being used.

DR. CRAWFORD: You mean prohibition did not ever really work in Nashville?

MR. TURRENTINE: No sir. That was a heyday for the bootleggers. There was plenty of whiskey anywhere, from a quarter to fifty cents a half pint. The amazing thing to me that people would fight beer joints and whiskey stores and then they would have it in their own refrigerator. That was always amazing to me and by being a milk man I would know people would fight somebody opening up a beer place, but then they would have a six pack in their own refrigerator. It's just funny the way that people act.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I'm not sure I understand it, but it's an old Southern tradition because I've seen the same thing in Arkansas and in Mississippi when I've been there. It's the same feeling I believe.

MR. TURRENTINE: That's right. A lot of times as the old saying is "Powder and paint will make a woman look what she ain't". People I think, think they can get out and say these things but the true person is the one that lives at home. It takes a lot of living in a house to make it a home. It's not outside.



DR. CRAWFORD: Have you always lived in this general area of Nashville?

MR. TURRENTINE: I was born and raised in six miles of this office but I have had the privilege of being in 49 states and Canada and Mexico but I hope some day to go to Alaska.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's the only one that you've not been in yet?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think you would like it.

MR. TURRENTINE: I've had quite a nice time at the old Alamo, San Antonio, Texas several times and Dallas, Houston, and the Astrodome, New Orleans. It's nice but being in the real estate business this many years and starting out on \$10,000 borrowed money, I've had to work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, your business has grown along with the city hasn't, it?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, I had a man the last few months, last year to make the million dollar club in a little less than eleven months, and he and my wife are going to own this company some day because she is much younger than I am.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, the name of a company has a lot to do with success. The name evidently means a lot.

MR. TURRENTINE: I think so, when you get a letter from Missouri, saying Ed Turrentine Real Estate, Nolensville

Road with no zip code or no nothing else or no number and it gets delivered



and I sell the property, I believe it means something. Not being conceited but I believe I've got three such letters in the last twelve months.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, there are a lot of realty companies in Nashville, but I doubt that many of them go back thirty something years. If they do I'll bet there are not a lot that were here then.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, there are a lot of names still going. I was President of the Nashville Board in 1959 and then John Webb who is dead and so is the two or three others that are dead that have been president of the Board since I have. This is a very, very complicated business and I never could understand why that anything that was insured by the government for the veterans or FHA, why that wasn't as good as our paper money which says that it is only legal tender because you are selling a piece of dirt only God can make. You are selling. You are not going to sell it to a man and his wife without it being fully covered with fire insurance. We know that the land is not going to burn and yet when you get ready to sell that mortgage, you've got to discount it for about five percent. I told Mr. Gore one night in Washington that I would buy every ten dollar bill in Washington for nine dollars and a half if he would give me an hour on the telephone and that's what I thought about it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now that was back before---

MR. TURRENTINE: That was back in '61. I told Albert "If you are going to ask \$800 for one of those black



calves, if you want eight, you're not going to say you want six. You are going to say ten hoping he will offer you eight". So I don't think they do the right kind of bargaining now on the discount and I think it is against the veterans and the people that they want to help.

DR. CRAWFORD: It has brought problems.

MR. TURRENTINE: It has brought big problems and it has brought-- if the people only knew the facts, I think the supply and demand is the best thing on earth instead of ceilings or freezing or coupons or anything else. I know back during the Depression, Mr. Roosevelt put the WPA. They built that ditch right over there. I can take you over there and show you that ditch, running across my property that WPA workers built.

DR. CRAWFORD: I didn't realize that was WPA labor of course.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, it was. Now that wasn't my property then. I've bought this by it being the only two corners going around the yard, I just wanted them and a little bit selfish, just two, I just wanted to own them both.

DR. CRAWFORD: And you moved the business onto this site then?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. I have the Key building, that building and the Gulf station leased out.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, of the mayors that you have seen in this city now while it was developing, who would you consider the most effective leader?

MR. TURRENTINE: Ben West and Joe Tarsh did a beautiful job as Mr. West was a whole lot like Boss Crump. He



tied that bow tie, didn't nobody tell him what to do. Mr. Briley, a lot of people fuss about Mr. Briley drinking, but I was standing talking to Joe Tarsh when Beverly came by and told Joe, "I want you to keep your job as finance director". And I believe if you will go into any city, Doctor they will know Briley or Joe Tarsh and they never had any trouble getting bonds. And I will say with all sincerity and I'm not against anybody that Beverly and Joe could do a better job running any city if Beverly stayed drunk three days a week than anybody else I know of living. Now Ben West is dead.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, he certainly got a lot of federal money for the downtown programs. You know Nashville started pulling ahead then of any city in Tennessee.

MR. TURRENTINE: Beverly is stubborn and mean and I tell him he is mean and he tells me I'm mean, but we get along all right. P He got what he wanted. I talk to him every week now. He's in the law business. I call him Bev and he calls me Ed. I'm older than he or Ben either one and Ben West and Wilson West were raised right at the Pike here, went to Central High School. And then Carmack Cochran was a good friend of mine who went to law school, Carmack is 73 and after he finished and started practicing law he sent his older brother Bob through and made a wonderful attorney out of him. That's Cochran and Martin and Dr. Lance's grandson is in there with them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well now the leadership that Nashville has had..?

MR. TURRENTINE: Through Dr. Lance and the Health Department and



we've had some wonderful doctors here that contributed a lot of their time to the city hospital that has been a big help and I couldn't give you a list of them because so many of them are not living. But people used to want to help people but now they don't know their next door neighbor.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, do you think that is partly because Nashville has grown into such a big city now? You used to know most of the families around, didn't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: I could lay in my bed back in '32 or '33 at home and tell whose car that was going up the Pike at night, but now you don't know. You could tell by the sound of the car who it was. I can say this, that the real estate business has been better to me I'm sure than I've been to it but I have tried and I have sweated tears and blood and spent my money. I'm proud of every honor I've had with them. Even though I couldn't swap them for a can of sardines, money wouldn't buy them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Nashville has undergone a lot of changes in this time and you have seen it. In regard to Memphis leadership, up until '54 of course, what kind of leader do you consider Mr. Crump?

MR. TURRENTINE: Knowing no other leaders down there, I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Loeb, I believe he was Mayor Loeb for a while, he seemed a very fair man to me. I only met him the one time. I think Mr. Crump had an organization that clicked like a watch, every part moved when it was supposed to. That's the im-

pression that Memphis government really worked?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Accurate, just like a watch, keep accurate time.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe that was the way it really was.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well now, I don't know Mr. Mose asked you as I told you a while ago, Mose has been there all of his life. And Mose was one of the first three Real Estate Commissioners that was appointed under Frank Clement, I believe. Mose Askew from Memphis, Harold Hays from Knoxville, Herbert Jordan from Nashville. Then when they took on the fifth one it was Jim Chamberlain from Chattanooga and Tom Seagrose from Shelbyville and then they change around now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know how relations were between Mr. Crump and Governor Clement?

MR. TURRENTINE: I thought they were good. And I believe they were. Were they not?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, as far as I know they were always good.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, that is the impression that I had.

DR. CRAWFORD: I know that Mr. Crump supported him against Mr. Browning in '52 and so far as I know they continued to be good after that.

MR. TURRENTINE: I think the ones that supported Frank Clement they always did.

DR. CRAWFORD: You felt that way, didn't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. I'd vote for him tomorrow if he'd run and if he hadn't gotten killed he would have been

governor again. That's what we was talking about the day and I told him, "I'll raise ten thousand dollars". So on Thursday before he got killed, I said, "I can raise that much to go".

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, when he put together his other friends around the state....

MR. TURRENTINE: He didn't back out on anything he said he would do. So many governors get in there and they forget you.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think he lost in his Senate race?

MR. TURRENTINE: He was double-crossed because he had a few people that didn't like him and they got out and worked, they brought in a bunch of votes for him in the primary and then voted against him in

DR. CRAWFORD: I had wondered.

MR. TURRENTINE: That's what happened.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, something was evidently wrong there.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, it was simply because people. Nashville claims to be the Athens of the South with churches and schools and so forth and so on and I'm not going to say a word against Nashville, however to me when you spend millions of dollars for buildings, but people are hungry, it doesn't make sense. Maybe I'm too much of a conservative.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that has happened.

MR. TURRENTINE: It's happening here and I'm sorry to say my church is doing it.

DR. CRAWFORD: However, Nashville is a beautiful city. I know there is a cost when you put that much into buildings.

MR. TURRENTINE: But the thing of it is, that's fine, but what good businessman could spend a million dollars for a building and use it five hours a week, two hours on Sunday, one hour on Wednesday and maybe no more. It doesn't make sense to me, Doctor. Now maybe it does to them. I can't make a living in my office five hours a week.

DR. CRAWFORD: No.

MR. TURRENTINE: That's the way that I look at it. I'm grateful for the life that I have had in helping the Agape, the unwed mother's home, the Lakeshore Home of the Aged, of which I was one of the first to aid it and help start that. And then the Tennessee Orphan's homes and the Youth Hobby Shop. We have two of those. And then the Woodbine Boy's Club, I paid rent on a house myself for two years to get it started and we have a beautiful Boy's Club here. My boy died, but I figured that anything that I did for the boys or girls that if it would keep one boy out of jail for a week that I was well, well, well paid. That was my thinking. And when people tell me people do things, I don't know of a human being that is perfect and the pencil makers evidently knew that because if they knew that you were going to make a mistake or they wouldn't have put that rubber eraser on the end of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that's right and we all need them too.

Mr. C. W. ...
...

to build ...
...

Mr. ...
...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

MR. TURRENTINE: I'm not going to condemn anybody that's made a mistake because I've made too many myself.

DR. CRAWFORD: That comes along with trying, doesn't it?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. If a man don't make a mistake he has never done anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Turrentine, let me ask you about another change now. When you grew up you didn't see a lot of Republicans around here.

MR. TURRENTINE: No sir, it's a funny thing to me. We had quite a few black Republicans then as you know that they were all Republicans when they were freed from slavery. At the present time I only knew a few.

DR. CRAWFORD: Most now have switched to the Democratic Party.

MR. TURRENTINE: Because they want something for nothing and Mr. Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt was the cause of that, in my estimation. I'm not knocking anybody, I'm stating it as I see it.

DR. CRAWFORD: The change did occur in the New Deal time, you know, from the Republican to the Democratic Party.

But the Republican Party didn't get a lot of support in Nashville before. What changes have you noticed in regard to the party standing in the city?

MR. TURRENTINE: I believe Doctor, the Republican Party is fast growing now in the schools and I believe that more of them are going to---maybe like me, some people say that you mug wump that you are going to vote for this one or that one. I don't want to ever see it where you have to vote straight party because I might have to not go to the polls because I'm going to vote just as long as I live for the man that I think will do the best job.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, now there was a time that you often didn't have any Republicans running, did you?

MR. TURRENTINE: That's right and a lot of times I didn't vote. I knew he was going to be elected, but I just didn't want him to have the satisfaction of having my vote. I don't want to be obligated to anybody except the man upstairs. I'm obligated to him. He's the only partner I've ever had in business. He and a good wife.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you have a good deal of independence in your positions and things now.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well, when my daddy turned the farm over to me when I was fifteen and told me to tell everybody what to do he says, "You better tell me too because everybody is older than you are and if you don't tell me they won't want to listen". So it was my job to bring home enough money on Saturday night for everybody to have their money. If there was any left I had four or five dollars and if I didn't have four or five dollars I didn't have anything.

Nevertheless my mother and daddy never wanted for anything and never drew one penny from anybody else or any aid. Back then the magistrate said, "We can get your mother and daddy a small welfare check." I said, "I make enough money my mother and daddy don't need any welfare". And there's no record that they've ever had a check of any description from the government or anybody else. They're buried in Woodlawn Memorial Gardens with Clark Steel Vaults. Both died in Baptist Hospital and I was holding them both.

My dad said, "Big boy, the only request I've got of you is to take as good a care of mother as you have taken of both of us". And I knew my dad well enough to know that he was satisfied. And my Ph.D after going to school six years is the four things he told me: (1) Tell the truth. (2) Pay for what you get. (3) If you are going to meet somebody don't be late, start earlier. (4) If you take a drink of whiskey, handle it, don't let it handle you.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's good advice.

MR. TURRENTINE: It's been good to me.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it's good to pass along to any young people. You have really grown up and your business has developed with the City of Nashville, I gather?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Ben West called me in one day and said, "Edgar, we're fixing to start buying for the interstate and I want you to go out to the state and get a bunch of options and start out and buy everything on the right hand side of Alabama Avenue and the left hand side of Delaware Avenue from Robinson Road back to Thirty-Eighth".

And the reason that he did that is because I had dealt with those people a lot of times in the milk business. And one of the funniest things that ever happened to me on a milk route, and don't many people remember Wallace University and Duncan Preparatory School, but they were both boy's schools. Mr. Botts Wallace, Dr. Wallace's house on Frances Avenue. She says, "Mr. Turrentine, have you ever seen any of our boys playing craps?"

I said, "No, mam." Now, if she had asked me if I had ever seen them shooting dice, I would have had to say, "yes".

DR. CRAWFORD: You did get acquainted with a lot of people in the work that you did?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Mrs. Bernard Pinsterwald, who her husband owned Bert Clothing Company was one of the richest women in Nashville and one of the nicest people that I ever knew. She would holler at me plum across the street if I had on my overalls. It didn't make no difference to her.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how large was Nashville then when you were a child, compared to the size now?

MR. TURRENTINE. About a third or less.

DR. CRAWFORD: You knew a lot of people in it then?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. Mr. H. G. Hill started the first grocery store here and it was a delivery store at the corner of Eighteenth and State and he delivered groceries in a one-horse wagon and went broke and then he came back on a cash basis. In that store I used to leave milk for J. L. Spore, who Mr. Spores's grandson or great grandson is head of the Parks part of Metro now.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, very often now people you didn't know you knew their daddy or someone.

MR. TURRENTINE: Oh yes, I have children to come in here now and want to buy a house and say, "you sold my daddy the house I was born in". It kind of makes you feel like you have been here too long maybe but that's for the Good Lord to decide, not me.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a vote of confidence too. Evidently, you have some satisfied customers or they wouldn't come back the second time.

MR. TURRENTINE: I think when I can show you a piece of property that I have sold seven times from \$18,000 to \$78,000, I believe that's confidence.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the price higher each time?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. But everybody that I dealt with was happy and come back and told me to resell it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, you have had a steady growth of your company and real estate values around here as the city grew.

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir. When I first had that corner over there, my taxes on it was \$99 and now they are \$1,900, so it's upped its value a little.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that's part of the whole city's development I suppose. Do you have any last thoughts about Mr. Crump as a leader?

MR. TURRENTINE: No, as I told you, Mr. Crump impressed me so much by being a man of his position to shake hands with a man that was a milk delivery boy in a khaki uniform. A lot of people looked at men, service station men and people like them because we had to work. We didn't wear dressed up clothes. But we would have been just as out of place dressed up on a milk route as a pig would

DR. GRANT

1918

1919

1920

1921

1922

1923

1924

1925

1926

1927

1928

1929

1930

1931

1932

1933

1934

1935

1936

1937

1938

1939

1940

1941

1942

1943

1944

1945

at Camelot. I will say that I don't regret one minute my daddy stopping me from going to school and putting me to work because he taught me the value of a dollar. Now I didn't want my children to ever have to work and go through what I did. That's the reason that I sent them through David Lipscomb and then on and I believe you know Dr. Batey and Mrs. Batey and that's my oldest daughter. And then Mrs. Reeves down there--well, of course I told one of the fellows down there in Memphis--I said Memphis is a whole lot better town now than it used to be because it's got my two children living in it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well it lost Mr. Crump, but it has gotten some good people.

MR. TURRENTINE: That's right. I sent two or three down there in place of them. I have a grandson down there who I hope you will know some day. His granddaddy thinks enough of him that I drove all the way down there to watch him play ball a couple of times. He is named for me and I am very fond of Eddie.

DR. CRAWFORD: Eddie goes to Southwestern?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, he was there with my son last year who was also at Southwestern.

MR. TURRENTINE: Is that right?

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well my oldest son-in-law is Dr. Batey there and Mrs. Batey is Head of the Home Economics Department at Harding High School. Both of my daughters are good cooks and can



sew. They can do anything they need to do and as I said, they had a good mother.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well I would gather that from what I know and I am glad I had a chance to know the grandson you mentioned, Eddie and that he could be at Southwestern with my son. They played ball, not on the same team. Eddie was in basketball and my son was in baseball and the tennis team. You have family in both parts of the state so I think your view of the comparison between Memphis and Nashville are very interesting.

MR. TURRENTINE: Well to me Memphis is a much prettier place and maybe it's the flowers or maybe it's the way people down there take their pride in keeping their lawns. Now I think this, this is something--I want you to look at that picture right there and then I will describe it to you. That is a country ham breakfast we have every year at the state fair. We buy a slice of the blue ribbon hams. They cost you a hundred dollars, then we have a ham breakfast out of the prize hams.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now let me guess, that is for some charity or special purpose.

MR. TURRENTINE: That \$8,600 those two ham brought last year went to the 4-H Clubs and the Future Farmers of America. Again I am trying to help somebody else. They're not as old as I am. They might be able to do more good in one month than I've ever been able to do in my life.

DR. CRAWFORD: You have been active in a lot of things,

Mr. Turrentine, and I am glad to look over some of your pictures here and see some of the people that I know.

MR. TURRENTINE: Old Hub Walters was a fine gentleman as I know.

Beverly Briley and I think if you were checking any city they know Beverly or Joe Torrence.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well I know it's almost time to stop, but let me ask something in regard to these different people you have known. They seem to generally be Democrats who knew one another and were pretty successful in the state. I see such people as Albert Gore and some people in municipal government as well. How did they get along together? Did you have any sort of general association or political machine? I know they belonged to the same party at that time. I'm guessing you saw about the same people in every campaign you worked, didn't you?

MR. TURRENTINE: Yes sir, Captain Johnny Little said he could elect--of course we've had a fraud in politics here in Nashville. Mr. Nixon's case wasn't the first one. We've had a lot of dead niggers voted here. Mr. Lyndon Johnson, I understand, voted a lot of them in Texas.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well that's one of our Memphis traditions too, you know.

MR. TURRENTINE: So it's not just happened today. But a funny thing, Doctor back when I first voted there was four voting precincts in this vicinity and now I guess it's fifteen to twenty because it's in Metropolitan government and in councilmanic districts

but it's a funny thing that these four stores at Tunney School and Whitsett School and Berry School and Ogelsby store, nobody ever knew who won in the Sixth District until the votes at Ogelsby store was counted and it wasn't seventy-five people that lived on that road but I have seen as high as 319 votes in that box. So it was always amazing to me how that many people went out there to vote.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well it sounds a little like the Memphis practice.

I think there is not too much difference from one to the other. Well this account has been very helpful and I certainly appreciate it Mr. Turrentine.







