

Earl Graves Oral History Interview- RFK #7, 6/18/1970
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Graves, Earl; administrative Assistant to Senator Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], New York (1965 - 1968). Graves discusses the switch between the Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the creation of their separate boards, issues that arose between board members, and the involvement of board members such as Tom Johnston, Franklin A. Thomas, and Judge Thomas R. Jones, among other issues.

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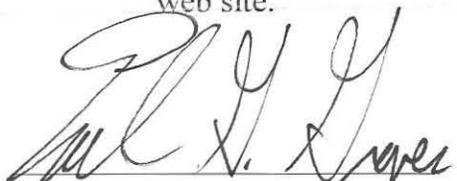
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Interviewed by: Roberta Greene

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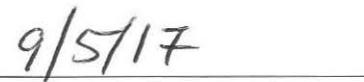
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Earl Graves- RFK #7

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
363, 369, 388	Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation and creation of the board, 1966
363, 367, 380, 387	“Matriarch situation” with Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation
363, 367, 376, 380, 391	Judge Thomas R. Jones’ [Judge Jones] involvement in both Bedford-Stuyvesant corporations
363, 366, 382, 377, 380	Changing the board for a new corporation, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, 1967
365, 373, 377, 391, 394, 412	Robert F. Kennedy’s [RFK] involvement in both Bedford-Stuyvesant corporations
370, 388, 402, 407, 410	Franklin A. Thomas [Frank Thomas], executive director for the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
377, 396	Bedford-Stuyvesant community
381	The board for the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
390	Frank Thomas’ and Judge Jones’ relationship
392, 395, 398, 402	Graves’ position in both Bedford-Stuyvesant corporations
394, 398, 405, 415	Issues with Tom Johnston
400, 406, 408	Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation working with the Dillons & Schmidts [D&S] board
410	Frank Thomas, John Doar, and the D&S board
411	André Meyer and Benno Schmidt contributions
419	Graves and Carter Burden visiting William J. vanden Heuvel
423	Final remarks on time with RFK and the future of the interviews

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OH	Page 401	18 June 1970	C
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Seventh Oral History Interview

with

EARL GRAVES

(June 18, 1970

New York, New York

By Roberta ^{W_o} Greene
^

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Project
(of the John F. Kennedy Library)

GREENE: I want to talk about Bedford-Stuyvesant, we started on that last time, ^{we} actually got a good start. We sort of rambled all over the map, but what I wanted to ask you is whether you got involved at all in the decision to work with the existing group in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the one that was called the Rent and Restoration Corporation. As I understood it, that was a question of whether you should try to organize ^{separately,} or work with the group that was already in existence.

GRAVES: Well, ~~its not Rent and Restoration.~~ ^S First of all, it was not Rent and Rehabilitation; it was . . .

GREENE: Rent and Restoration Corporation, that's not what is?

GRAVES: No. R ^{and} R. ~~and~~ The name of it was the Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation. The question you asked me was whether or not I played any part in getting involved with either the present group, which is called the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, or the initial group, which ^{was} ~~is~~ called the Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation. Now, to answer your question, first off, I was instrumentally ^{and deeply} involved in helping to set up both groups. The first group we set up was the group that had the women in it and the group that we had the problems with in terms of their strong feelings against Judge [Thomas] Jones because of what they felt was ^{his} ~~the~~ underhandedness and rather shoddy way that they ^{had treated} ~~thought~~ that he /them. And, of course, dealing with ^{what} /in fact was a Matriarch situation as far as that Board was concerned as ^{was} ~~it constituted one of those issues they put the~~ ^{when it was originally put together} ~~other one~~ in the first board. It was obvious that those women intended for the Bedford-Stuyvesant

project to kind of be their little tea party kind of thing, it was going to be their thing, they were going to name the executive director, who they anticipated or wanted to be Donald Benjamin, and they were going to decide what blocks were done first and what was going to be done, and they really envisaged^{igned} it being their little thing and living with it as their own thing. When it became obvious to us, oh, I can't remember the exact period of time into the Corporation, but it wasn't more than probably a month, if that long, but I can't remember the exact time, well, no, it's longer than a month because we changed the Corporation around March or April.

GREENE: Does October sound right?

GRAVES: No, it's not, October.

GREENE: I was trying to figure that out last night, but I didn't have it with me.

GRAVES: No, not so. We made the announcement in December of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Renewal and Rehabilitation Corporation, which is the name of the Corporation-- now the name totally comes back. Whatever I said before, it's really the Renewal and

Rehabilitation Corporation. He made the announcement of that Corporation in ~~December of '69~~, December of '68 at the public school out in Bedford-Stuyvesant on Monroe Street, Thompsons Avenue, Senator Kennedy and all the other big dignitaries were there. In March or April of '69 we changed it.

GREENE: It's not '69; it must be . . .

GRAVES: I'm sorry, '68. It has to be '68 because he announced . . .

GREENE: In March.

GRAVES: Yeah, he announced in March. When was the first date ^{that} when I said, '66?

GREENE: Right,^{so} it would be '67, I think.

GRAVES: The time has gone so fast that nobody even can remember back that far.

GREENE: Yeah, well those dates can be later verified. You're right.

GRAVES: /The initial time we had our first meeting of Kennedy going out to Bedford-Stuyvesant, it was the first week in February of 1966. The announcement of the program was in December of 1966. And the blow^{up}, as far as that Board was concerned, was in early '67. I know that it happened around March and April in there because . . .

GREENE: I have those dates. I just didn't write them down,
^{but}
~~so~~ I can check them.

GRAVES: I forget the exact time, but when you ask me
was I involved, I was involved in making the decision to
dump one Board. I mean when we said we were going
to dump it, it wasn't a matter of we kicked it
around, as I think I told you last time, we made
that judgment to do it, and the next day we had
another corporation. We got together with Crevath,
Swaine, and Moore in the middle of the night.

GREENE: Well, we really didn't talk about that in detail,
that was one of the things I wanted to get to.

GRAVES: Well, we just decided that we couldn't work with
that Board any more, and I think ^[Thomas M.C.] Tom Johnston was ^{very}
~~our~~
instrumental in saying, well, let's put
together another board, ^{and} we sat down and looked
at all of the options we had / we did put together
another Board, ^{and} who would be on it, and how we
would do it, ^{and they we asked them} ~~asked me~~ whether or not they
would serve and what that would do as far as the
community was concerned. And, of course, it did
cause great consternation in the community. At a
large community meeting, they literally burned, or

figuratively burned, ^[Thomas R.] Judge Jones at the stake. They hung him in effigy, signs calling him Uncle Tom Jones and so forth, at a meeting right after we had announced the second corporation. ^QThe second corporation was called, of course, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. There were several factors involved, as I said before, in the decision to dump the other Board or to get rid of the other Board, the first being that they had this matriarch thing of them looking forward to this thing as being their own thing, the second was the relationship of Judge Jones to the members of that first Board and their animosity towards him, and the third factor was, of course, that they had decided on who they thought should have been the person who was the executive director, and it was an open-and-shut case. They had just decided that they were going to have a corporation and they were going to make this Donald Benjamin the head of that corporation, and there were no other options in terms of even who they would interview.

GREENE: Hadn't they actually decided among themselves that they would choose ^{his board if Jones became -- they would choose} who would work with him if he

became the head? Wasn't that one of the things they were dictating?

GRAVES: Well, Jones was the head. They had an election and Jones was voted the chairman. In fact, Jones was picked as the chairman rather arbitrarily. You know, it has^d to be ^{done} in an official election, but Jones had been designated as the chairman and I played a direct role in that again. Senator Kennedy had asked me who did I think should be the chairman, and I said it was a toss-up in my mind ^{vis-a-vis} between [William C.] Willie Thompson, Senator Thompson, or Judge Jones. After focusing on them, which to this day I guess it was a mistake now, I said that it should be Judge Jones because of Judge Jones' demeanor and his stature, as opposed to Senator Thompson. Senator Thompson was a very bright, astute guy. I don't mean that in a derogatory sense but Judge Jones always came over as being the judge. I thought that that kind of mood or that kind of person lent himself much more to being the guy who should be heading up that Board now.

When we decided to change Boards, we were able to get people who were on the first Board to

agree to go back onto the second one, for instance
Senator Thompson, who was on the first Board, and
~~we told him that~~ we just had him resign--I mean
it was a ruthless way we did it, No question about
it. I mean we just had him sign an application, so
one day ~~you're~~ ^{they were} on one Board, and the next day they
were all sitting on another Board, signed ^{ing} forms.
We had the thing incorporated like, to boggy ^e it out.
~~The other Board~~ we could not abolish the other
Board because it had been incorporated, and we
didn't even try to. We just dropped it out there
and figured ^{that} it would die. Far from that, the
Board has not died, as a matter of fact, they're
sponsoring non-profit housing, a project out in
Bedford-Stuyvesant today. Nobody hears very much
about them, you don't recognize ^{who they are} ~~today~~ what all
they're supposed to be, but they have a chairman,
and they still have meetings, and they kind of
piddle around ^{a little bit in what} ~~into what~~ it was that was originally
planned for them to do, and which, of course, the
Restoration is doing now.

Putting together the Restoration Board at

[Franklin A.]

that time, we had finally locked on ^{When} Frank Thomas to be the executive director. / Frank Thomas finally decided to do it, there's no doubt in my mind that he had turned the job down because we were talking about twenty-five thousand dollars for him, the starting salary, and he said this wasn't enough money, and when we said we would pay him forty-five thousand, he agreed to take the job.

GREENE: Was he a [John V.] Lindsay recommendation?

GRAVES: Well, he was in the Lindsay administration as a Deputy Police Commissioner, and we tried to politically put it together so that Frank Thomas would come out to be Lindsay's choice so it would lock Lindsay into a commitment as far as that Board was concerned. It wasn't a Lindsay recommendation. We didn't call ^{up} Lindsay and say, "do you have anybody in mind we could use for. . . ."

GREENE: And he didn't call you up and suggest it, the name?

GRAVES: No, definitely not. The way that Frank Thomas' name came up is that we were sitting in 110 ^{EAST} E. 45th Street, talking about various things, myself, Tom Johnston, and, I think, [inaudible] and we were kicking around the ^{names of} various guys around the country that we

thought we could have consider^{ed} for a position. And I don't even remember how, to this day, Frank Thomas' name came to mind, ^{but} ~~to me~~ and I said, "what about Frank Thomas?" and everybody went, "Who is Frank Thomas?" And I said, "well, he's a guy that grew up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, he's a lawyer and went to Columbia Law School and he's Deputy Police Commissioner, and he's in the D.A.'s ^{District} ~~Deputy~~ Attorney's] office, U.S. Attorney's office, working for [Robert M.] Morgenthau. I guess Tom Johnston said, "That sounds like a good name, why don't we check that out." Sometime that day, or within a period of forty-eight hours, Tom Johnston talked to Morgenthau and I set up a meeting with Frank Thomas. We met in the John Barleycorn and had a meeting with Tom Johnston, myself, and Frank Thomas. Frank Thomas said he wasn't interested at that point because then we were talking about twenty-five thousand, and back and forth, and then I arranged for another meeting and where I think he did meet the Senator and then he told the Senator, "No," and then (Lewis h.) Lou Douglas,

who became Frank Thomas' deputy, had already, for better or for worse, really been hired ~~and then~~ ^(b) ~~it turned out~~ when I say for better or for worse, I don't mean that as an ^{indictment} ~~an~~; Lou turned out to be the real mover, prime mover, as far as that project was concerned. When Lou Douglas^s left and went to Urban America in Washington, Frank Thomas had ^{Problems like} ~~a prospect~~ [^] he'd never had before.

GREENE: When was this?

GRAVES: That Lou Douglas^s left?

GREENE: Yeah.

GRAVES: Oh, Lou Douglas^s didn't leave the corporation until ^A well, let's see, he's been in Washington now I guess about a year.

GREENE: But after the Senator's death?
Right.

GRAVES: Oh, yeah./ But Lou Douglas^s had a taxi-cab ride coming from somewhere, going somewhere with Frank Thomas and wrote on a little piece of paper which he showed me at my house that same evening ^(b) he said to Frank, he said he just ^{tried to} ~~when I~~ talked to him ^{a little} ~~over later~~ ^{it} ~~And~~ about how he decided to try and switch Frank ^{on} ~~down~~, he said he just, off the ~~top~~ of

his head, figured if we wanted him that badly (which we really did at that point because we were kind of desperate ^{guy and bring him in} to find the right ^{guy}), he ^{figured} said he'd try something wild, ^{He'd} and put down forty-five thousand dollars as a salary, and he said he put it on the back of a matchbook or a piece of paper and show^{ed} it to Frank, and he said, "What would you think of a salary like that?" And Lou said to me/^{that} Frank was visibly moved by ^{somebody showing this salary,} the slight ^{in the} salary as I can imagine the average person would be today by forty-five thousand dollars, and Lou came directly to my house ^{that evening} after Frank had dropped him off, I think, and ^{we} when he sat down and talked, and Lou said, "If you give him forty-five thousand dollars, you can get him." I remember calling Tom Johnston and saying, ["]that ["] if you can find forty-five thousand dollars, you can get Frank Thomas. " Tom Johnston said to me, "Well, we got forty-five thousand dollars, so let's get him." After that, it was just a matter of ^{going down in} history.

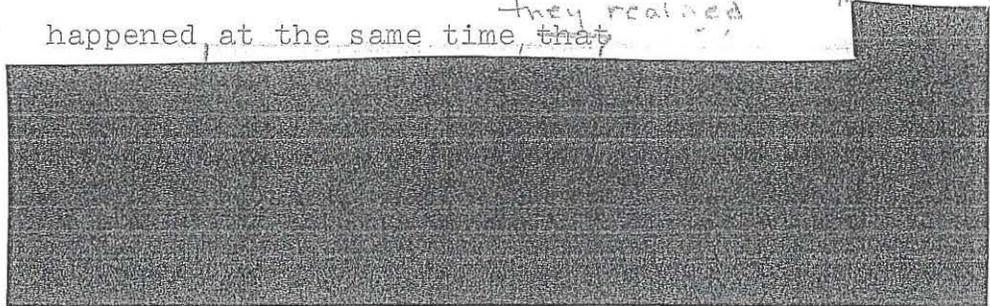
GREENE: On a decision like that, would Tom consult the Senator, or would he make the decision himself?

GRAVES: He made the decision himself. He didn't consult the Senator at all. He made the decision on the telephone while I was talking to him.

GREENE: That kind of authority was not unusual?

GRAVES: No, I went out and bought ^{twenty-thousand} \$20,000 dollars of furniture. ^[International Business Machines Corporation] When I started buying IBM typewriters, I bought all the furniture for the Restoration Corporation. I just bought all that I thought we needed. We had a certain degree of freedom, we had enough rope to hang ourselves in the Kennedy office, and we were just fortunate we never hung ourselves. There was a thing of putting it together so that we could get . . . it was not going to be easy to sell the Board and to sell the members of the business community, Frank Thomas being paid forty-five thousand dollars, so there was a meeting ^{it matter} where there was a ^{of} bringing Frank Thomas and André Meyer and Benno Schmidt together at a meeting in the Senator's apartment. ^{his living} At that time, the Senator was sitting ^{room} and the kind of divided into three sections just by the way the chairs were arranged and Frank Thomas was just moving around. I remember Frank and the

Senator and André Meyer kind of off to the side ^{moving} and
 Tom Johnston said, ^{"we're} ~~we'll~~ talk ^{ing} about giving \$45,000,
 but we ^{ve} got to get a good man." And André Meyer, to
 whom ~~for~~ ^{\$45,000} ~~ty-five thousand~~ ^{dollars}, sounds like lunch money,
 said "Well, I think we do have to pay a salary
 like that if we're going to have a good person,"
 and Kennedy said, "Fine, we're paying that." That's
^{what} where it is." But I mean Tom Johnston would have
 committed himself fully enough that they could
 have a discussion like that. He was pretty sure
 that it was not going to be a problem. So Frank
 Thomas moved on ⁱⁿ, of course, and then ^{they} agreed to get
 Frank Thomas a car and a driver. And then that ^{when}
 happened, ^{they realized} at the same time that



GREENE: Yeah, we talked ^{about} ~~ap~~ut that.

GRAVES: Having two separate corporations, one on Madison Avenue and the other in Bedford-Stuyvesant, was absurd. And then one of the things that John Doar obviously did as far as that part was concerned,

as soon as he came in there, was to move over. I eventually think that those two corporations will have to become one. It's only a matter of time.

GREENE: You said that last time. >

Let me ask you something else, what I was thinking of before when I said Jones, ^{I was} ~~was~~ incorrect. I meant when it was announced that Thomas had been selected for this job, then there was a rebellion, as I understand it, among the Board.

GRAVES: That rebellion had taken place prior to that. The rebellion was not so much that Thomas had gotten ^{e the} a job ^{one} the rebellion was that Jones had dumped ^{on} ~~on~~ ^{corporation} ~~this place~~ and started another one ^{and still was the} ~~was filled with~~ chairman, and that further, whoever it was that we finally picked, ^{that} we were going to decide who was going to be the executive director. It was just more icing on the cake in terms ^{it, the people} of that ^{he} would be incensed when they found out that in fact it was Frank Thomas. But Frank Thomas' appointment to that ~~Board~~ by itself was not what it

GREENE: So it was not a personal thing then?

GRAVES: No, as a matter of fact, and giving all due credit ^{would} to Frank Thomas, I think that Frank Thomas' personality

has been very helpful in terms of how he's gotten^e along with those people. I mean he has kind of really poured oil on the water from day one. ^{He went out and....} You see, Frank Thomas does not go to a lot of community meetings. As a matter of fact, when he does go, it's mostly ~~of~~ political stuff and making judgments that would keep the corporation safe and sound. But I think that Frank did a good job of getting along with various community elements, as difficult as that is. ~~When~~ you have so many of these diverse groups in that society, [^] though it doesn't begin to approach Harlem in terms of all the problems they have, you still have a number of diverse groups.

GREENE: Well, at the point where you had the whole blow^{up} and the one ~~Board~~ was replaced by another, at that point, did the Senator get directly involved, or was it again you and Tom Johnston?

No.

GRAVES: /It was myself, Tom Johnston, Lou Douglas, and Judge Jones. ^{was} Frank [^] not very much involved because he hadn't really resigned from the city yet. It was Tom Johnston, ^{and} myself who really did most of the... . well, we put ^{three} extra telephones in Judge Jones'

house, I assigned somebody to Judge Jones; I used to call the person, he'd keep an open line to wherever he was in the meeting, and as soon as Judge Jones started to get in trouble, I would call the person and tell Judge Jones what to say. It ^{was} unbelievable ^{at the time just} to think that's how we started to orchestrate that thing to kind of keep it down, that's how we started to orchestrate that thing in order to keep down the furor that could bring some type of negative publicity to Senator Kennedy.

GREENE: Was he kept informed?

GRAVES: He was aware of the fact, ~~there was very little,~~ with the exception of the Amsterdam News, which was the local community newspaper, carrying a lot about it, there was very little ^{flack} in the press or in the outside world, other than in Bedford-Stuyvesant ^{where} ~~knew that~~ this was going on. And you have to understand that in a community of four hundred and fifty thousand people where half of the people are poor and half of the people are on Welfare and half of the people don't have decent housing and decent hospitalization and so forth, an internal fight between two groups of people, who ^{are} were middle-class at best, over who should probably get the forty ^{40,000} thousand-dollar job, and ~~who should~~ where the offices

should be, and who should be on the Board of Directors, doesn't mean very much. So the only people who are really going to be interested in something like that are people who have a vested interest in it, you see.

GREENE: Right.

GRAVES: That's a very small number. And when you start ~~to~~ about talk like that, you start talking ~~to~~ hundreds; you're not talking about thousands. And when you say you've got a half a million people in Bedford-Stuyvesant and maybe you've got a couple thousand who even begin to vaguely know that there's some kind of ~~flack~~ going on, then it's not that significant. Well, it would have been significant had some white reporter picked up the fact, ~~that~~ and put it in the front page of the paper, ~~that~~ that there was a big ~~blow~~ up, that ⁱⁿ this new project that Senator Kennedy had just announced ~~whereby~~ we, in the middle of the night, had literally just changed corporations ~~that~~ that would have been a problem.

GREENE: Had there been any earlier overtures toward this Board to try to get them to expand voluntarily before

you took such drastic action?

GRAVES: Well, Judge Jones ^{says that there} sensed it was; that's not, in fact, accurate. We just ^{thought} found that it was not going to be workable, and we suggested to him that we should expand, but ^{if} when we were suggesting to them so that it wouldn't appear that we had just completely closed them out, when we suggested to them that we should expand, ^{we} we had already decided that ^{we} we knew that they were going to find an expansion of the kind that he was talking about unacceptable, and therefore, that would give us the hook to hang ^{on} our hats, to be able to go forward and set up another corporation. So the expansion thing, that women refused to expand and to make the Board more broad-based, was nonsense. I mean, what we had suggested to them in terms of expansion and making it more broad-based. . . . ^{would have been} if they had bought that, I mean, they would have been out of their minds to begin with. So what we were suggesting to them, we knew they had to reject, and once they rejected it, that gave us a base for being able to toss them out.

GREENE: Okay, then how did you go about rounding the people up for the ^{new} Board? Where did the names come from, and who approved them?

GRAVES: Judge Jones and myself and ~~(Lewis I.)~~ Lou Douglass and Tom Johnston sat down and started thinking about various people and that's how we ended up with, for instance, James Cato and (Albert) Al Vann. Those were guys that Frank Thomas and I had gone to public school with. Mark Bethel, who was a gang leader in Beford-Stuyvesant when I was in high school. So Al Vann I knew because we played basketball together, and, ^{he and} infact, Frank Thomas were on the same basketball team in high school together. James Cato, the same thing. Father (Henry B.) Hucles as being on the Board, he was the priest at my church. I'm sure as you listen to this, you just say it's absolutely unbelievable that we put together a Board like this, but this is exactly how it happened. Judge Jones putting on ~~(Mrs. Robert V., Jr.)~~ Mattie King, she was the secretary of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People].

Q) We were looking at people who would be acceptable to the community and, likewise, that we could control

in terms of votes when we needed it, and where we were going, and what we could do, because we were moving with the Senator's career. This Bedford-Stuyvesant project was important, ^{I think,} enough to be able to show that he had done something in the community to really stop ^{it} and turn it around.

GREENE: Is this still a middle-class group we're talking about, even the expanded Board?

GRAVES: Very much so, totally middle-class, no other way to describe that Board. That Board has three judges on it, the head of the ^[New York City] Housing Authority

GREENE: But the kind of guys you're talking about that you knew from high school? Were they all at this point in the middle-class bracket too?

GRAVES: Al Vann is an Assistant Principal of a school, so he would be ² but the thing is, you know, it's like saying that Earl Graves doesn't relate to the ghetto when Earl Graves grew up in the ghetto and had one pair of pants and one pair of shoes ² that's not true. I lived there all my life ² the fact that I have, ostensibly, or in quotes, "moved out", that's a literal statement and not really a statement of fact ² because, once you've been there,

you really don't move away from it. There's no way of a Black person ever moving away from what he is. all he does is get up every morning and look in the mirror and he sees what he is and he knows what he is. I'm, of course, not saying that you're hanging your head ^{in that} what I am saying is that you recognize the problems you have as a Black person, ~~and~~ the problems of a Bedford-Stuyvesant, if you have any kind of conscience at all, have to be your problems, whether you live there or you don't live there. One of my greatest ambitions is hopefully that one day I'll really be able to go back to Bedford-Stuyvesant and make a meaningful contribution to the problems ^{that} they have there. And I don't mean meaningful in terms of just going back and working with ^{the} Boy Scouts, which I do all the time. I'm talking about going back and putting dollars in there, that I will have, to be able to make some change, if it's nothing more than running reading clinics where the kids know how to read when they graduate ^{from} school or feeding some of the kids breakfast, ^{that} you know, something that I know/I've

made a contribution that I can see.

GREENE: Yeah, the reason I asked you that is because, ^(Jack) Newfield, I guess, has the most extensive chapter on Bedford-Stuyvesant of any of the books ^{on Robert} ~~about~~ Kennedy. He stresses the fact that after the blowup, [^] that the whole point of it was to get a more broad-based and diverse Board. He makes it sound like you have brought in a lot of the real street people; and from what you said last time, I got the impression that that was not very accurate.

GRAVES: Listen, Jack Newfield wrote what he was told, right? Jack Newfield's a bright guy, but Jack Newfield was caught up in the magnetism and charisma of dealing with Senator Kennedy, ^{finding a} Carter Burden in the office, a Frank Thomas who was impressive. You have to understand what you're dealing with; you're dealing with the human frailties of life. When you see a Frank Thomas who's a Black guy, he's bright, physically a guy who in a room you focus on ^{the} the guy's six-foot-four, who's ^{an} all-American basketball player, navigator, ^{flier} of a B-52 flying halfway around the world; and all that's something ^{that} you don't find the negatives in a person like that; you find the positives ^{so}

when Frank Thomas ^{set} ~~got~~ down, ^{to} "the reason we did this with our Board was to make it more broad-based," I'm telling you that Lou Douglas and Frank Thomas and I know, and the rest of those people know, that that Board is no more representative if you just go through the list of who's on there, if you want to take the time to do it, ^{that board is no more...}

GREENE: I've seen that, but, of course, a lot of them are just names to me and I really don't know anything.

GRAVES: Here, Charles Angel is a union organizer, ^{if you were} just going through it alphabetically, and there's not a name ^{on} ~~of~~ here that you could pick and tell me ^{he} ~~who~~ represents the people. You have Charles Angel who's a union organizer and certainly middle-class. Mark Bethel has three businesses in Bedford-Stuyvesant; granted he was a gang leader, but he still owns three businesses and does not exactly live from hand-to-mouth. He travels when he wants to travel and he pays ^{what} ~~when~~ he wants to. The only person you could say who was on that Board who was representative of the people and we put him on there and we did ^{things} ~~so many~~ to placate him that he was in fact a guy we were using, ^[Robert] was Sonny Carson who was

the head of CORE (Congress ^{on} of Racial Equality).

And Sonny Carson has since resigned; he resigned a long time ago from that Board, he said, you know, they didn't relate to him and he didn't relate to ~~them~~^{it}, and he just walked away from it.

GREENE: Okay, did you steer clear of more of that type of person because you thought you couldn't work with them, or did you think you couldn't get them? Why did you compose it like this? Was that the most efficient way?

GRAVES: Yeah, at the time, we were interested in bringing together the people who had constituencies, we were interested in bringing together chiefs who had Indians behind them. And these people you're talking about, you bring a union organizer on Board, James Cato, we figured that we brought on a Cato and a [Rudolph, Jr.] Rudi Clarence, for instance. Now Rudi Clarence went to Columbia with Frank Thomas, Rudi Clarence had gone to Boys High and run track ^{and was from the} ~~for the~~ ^{So nobody could...} community. The young Turks ^{were} out there in Bedford-Stuyvesant, ^{we} ~~would~~ assumed that ^{if} you had a Cato, an Al Vann, and a Rudi Clarence

although they all had master's degrees and all had great jobs ^A and nobody's going to say, well, he wasn't from the area. And they all were young enough to still ^{be} / focused ^{on} / as being one of the guys from the neighborhood. ^{But} Almira Coursey is very middle-class; Reverend [William J.] Hall has a ~~sixty thousand dollar~~ ^{\$60,000} house on President Street; Pazel Jackson makes ~~thirty thousand dollars~~ ^{\$30,000} a year ^{at a bank}; Cyril Jones is a physician ^o [Irving] Joyner ^o I mean, ^{-- there's} there just is nobody on this Board ^A no way that you can describe this Board as being anything other than middle-class. It's a terribly middle-class Board, in no way representative of the residents of that community.

GREENE: That's really what I wanted to know. ^{All right,} ~~Alright,~~ let me ask you something else. After this blow ^{up}, was there any effort made by you or others to placate ~~these~~ women? You said that they did not disband and dissolve as you expected. Did you try to work with them at all, or did you give up on it?

GRAVES: I remember taking Elsie Richardson out to dinner, I remember taking two or three of those women out

to dinner with the full knowledge of the office,
prior to the blow, the real, ^{big} blow, trying to
work it out, ^{and} I had seen it couldn't work out.
After it, we just went ahead and did what we did
by putting together another ^{Board,} and stopped
trying to work at that. Lou Douglas, on behalf
of Frank Thomas, ^{he} did start to move around and
talk ^{to them} and see if he could open some lines of com-
munication ^{and} Frank Thomas has, obviously, had
meetings with them since this thing has hap-
pened. I would think that most of the ^{haranguing} ~~haranguing~~
and so forth that took place at that time is ^{now} just
a matter of history. ^{That} corporation in itself
has been very, very fortunate in terms of all the
positive publicity ^{that} it's gotten ^e and no negative
publicity. That corporation has been very fortunate
in terms of whenever they've had a demonstration
^{of} and some of the trainees ^{who} wanted more money or
something like that in the training program, you
never even saw it in the paper because they set-
tled it that quickly. And whenever there ^{were} ~~was~~
IBM (~~International Business Machines~~) ^{out} typewriters
stolen, which I was amazed to find/was going on on a

regular basis, they stole like thirty or ^{forty} ~~forth~~ IBM typewriters at five hundred dollars a clip out of the hotel, ~~that~~ no one has ever even heard about that. Their fiscal arrangements are done in such a fine manner, which cannot be said about most poverty programs, ^{that} that was another thing that kept them out of getting any publicity because the most important thing the Senator said was, "I don't want to read any negative things about things which are very academic. And there's no reason why you can't have a decent business." There was a little bit of a ^{haggle} ~~hackle~~ that they went out and just hired Arthur Anderson ^{and Co.} to be the accounting firm, ~~as opposed to hiring and paying~~ ^{on them on} a retainer ^{\$20,000} ~~twenty thousand dollars~~ ^{a year} as opposed to hiring a Black accounting firm.

But I mean the problems today have been resolved. One of the biggest problems that I think that corporation has is, . . . for what it is doing and what it has done, I just think a massive job of identifying that corporation further, in terms of what is being done, has got to be accomplished. They're very fortunate in that they have the monies, kind of like the

darling of the government, this particular program. ^{They} to have gotten ^e ten million dollars from ^[Donald] Rumsfeld ^{project} for an OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] ^{it's} and that money not to have gone through the local CAP [Community Action Program] program. Any OEO monies that come in to a community that was designated a poverty area, was supposed to come right through the local CAP Program and then go into the community.

^J This money went right to Restoration directly because you've got [Jacob K.] Javits and [Charles E.] Goodell on the Board, on the D ^{and} S Board, and you have all those heavy ^{weight} ~~rate~~ businessmen, and because YIA [Youth-in-Action] has been found wanting (which is the local CAP group) in terms of keeping their business books and how they move ^{and a lot of} things around, internal conflict has taken place in YIA ^{where} you have not had that kind of problems; ^{Since that} second Board has been put together, you had very little internal conflict. ^{The} only internal conflict you have, and it's an ongoing thing, is that Judge Jones and Frank Thomas are really at war with each other. I mean it's not something that comes to the surface, and you wouldn't know it, but Judge Jones

would like to ^{at}, you know, just chop off Frank Thomas' head/any time he could.

GREENE: How far back does that go?

GRAVES: Right back to the very beginning. Judge Jones from the very beginning resented Frank Thomas [↳] having a car and resented Frank Thomas making forty-five thousand dollars a year and, ^{all right,} ~~alright,~~ this is all off the record, ~~but~~ Judge Jones was a detriment to that program from the beginning in terms of ^{he got on,} ~~once~~ [^] there was always something [⊙] we had to deal with two situations, what was good for the community and what was going to make Judge Jones happy. Well, a program doesn't function like that. ^{when} ~~I mean~~ you've got to deal with so many personalities, ~~that~~ [⊙] it kind of boggs down in bureaucracy.

GREENE: Okay, how much did the Senator get involved in something like that ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ just trying to keep them away from . . . ?

GRAVES: He didn't. He assumed that we were going to do that. The only thing he said, [↳] was he wanted to see things move [⊙] that was the thing that the Senator always said, "Why are ^{n't} we doing so-and-so? why isn't this ⊙

moving? and why isn't that moving? why isn't this happening?"

GREENE: Okay, what was your position in this whole thing, simply by virtue of the fact that you were on the Senator's staff, you were Black, and you were from the community? What kind of a position did that put you in with the various elements?

GRAVES: Well, there's no question that I alienated myself from the women on that Board.

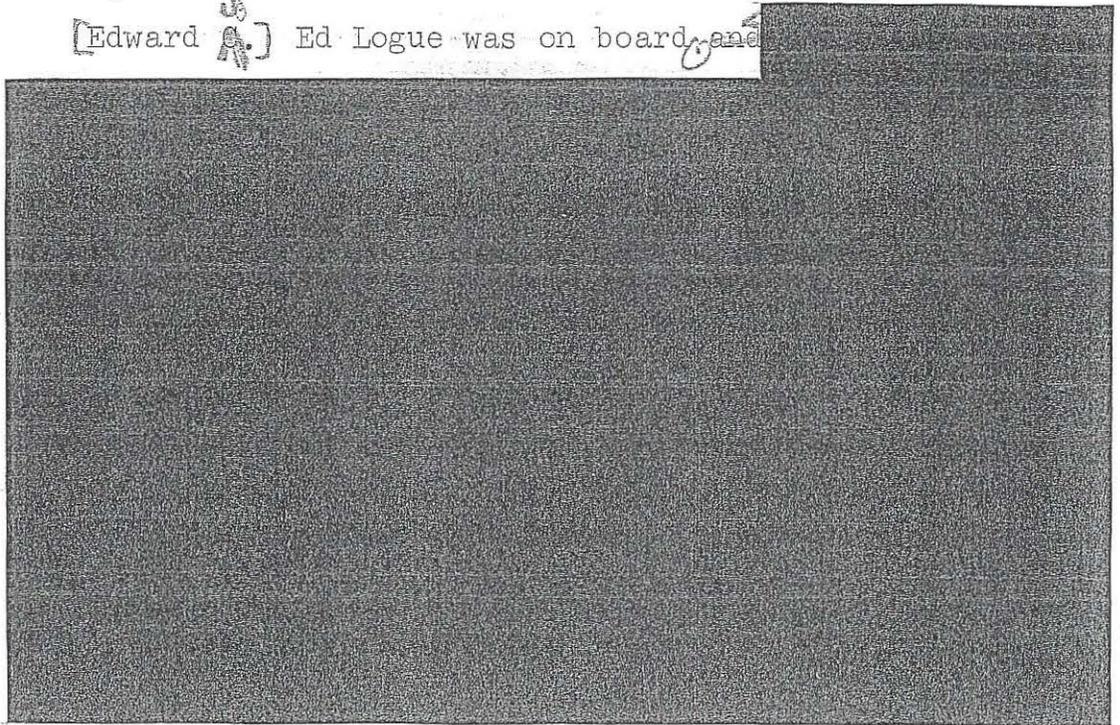
GREENE: Did they see you as a traitor, like one of their own that had turned against them?

GRAVES: No, they didn't see me as being a traitor. They only saw me as being from Kennedy's office and therefore being nothing other than a guy who represented Kennedy and a guy that, therefore, was against them. They never tried to pull that thing on me of not being from the community and not understanding, because those women who were saying that had just moved up here from down South ten years ago. I mean I had grown up and spent my entire life there, my wife taught school there, so, they couldn't pull that on me, but they just saw

me as being, you know, the Black guy who happened to be working in Kennedy's office, an all-white office, an all-white situation. The only difference that they saw between myself and, say, a Tom Johnston or Carter Burden, was they lived in Manhattan and I lived in Brooklyn. But other than that, we were all adversaries as far as they were concerned.

GREENE: And what about with the D and S [&] ~~force~~ ^{boards}, did you have much contact with them?

GRAVES: I had a substantial amount of contact with the D [&] ~~and~~ ^{board} S ~~force~~ in the beginning, particularly when [Edward ^J ~~A.~~] Ed Logue was on board, and



[REDACTED]

GREENE: How would he respond to your complaints?

GRAVES: He would complain to Tom Johnston.

GREENE: Would that give you problems with Johnston?

GRAVES: Yeah, Johnston just tried to ease me away from the project more and more.

GREENE: What would you do at that point? Did you ever bring it to the Senator's attention or that was not the kind of thing the Senator heard about?

GRAVES: Well, no, he really didn't want to hear about that kind of nonsense, but in addition to that, by that time, he had almost decided to run. I mean, it wasn't just Tom Johnston. You were dealing with a different thing, too. I consider myself a very strong personality in terms of when I see something that's not right, I have to call a spade a spade. Maybe politically, it's not the most expeditious thing to do, but it's a thing which part of me says it must shout out and say something ^{about}. And then, of course, because I was on the Senator's staff, I was kind of like the Senator's guy, ^{and} so even the same thing that was true with the women was true with Frank Thomas. Frank Thomas didn't have a problem with

there
Carter Burden coming over and being over/and saying,
~~that~~ I think that this ought to happen and that
ought to happen ^{first} of all, he was awed by the
fact that Carter Burden was/Carter Burden. He
didn't have a problem when Tom Johnston ^{with Tom Johnston} went home
to his house on East 68th Street every night,
Carter went to the River House on 52nd but when
Earl Graves went two blocks away to his home in
the center of Bedford-Stuyvesant where he could
sit there and know what was going on ^{and} I should
say that Frank Thomas effectively moved to get
me not involved in the project/because he just saw
me. . . . I would come in, and the people on his
staff would respond to me because the first ten
people who were hired were persons who I got on
file for Frank Thomas, and he didn't want to acknow-
ledge this. He didn't want to acknowledge the fact
that I had brought him on board and found him. The
Judge didn't want to acknowledge the fact that I
had had him appointed. So it quickly became a
thing between the Judge, Frank Thomas, and Eli
Jacobs, that I found myself reading about the

project in the newspaper, living right there in Bedford-Stuyvesant. That's why I say, you know, I was telling someone just yesterday, and I think it is so unfortunate that today that in the ghetto you are dealing with so many internal conflicts in terms of personalities and power struggles that what had to happen, even if the money was available, there's so many other things to overcome and then when you don't have the money that's available, you say, in this Administration because of a war, then you have the kind of problems you do in that Bedford-Stuyvesant project, you just wonder if communities like in Newark, that and I was referring to when I was having this discussion with somebody yesterday, I was referring to the thing of what had (Kenneth) Kenny Gibson really won by winning a mayoralty in Newark, New Jersey. If there's any place that could be the end of the world, it's Newark, New Jersey, in terms of the problems that they have there, the enormity of the problems are so great. Bedford-Stuyvesant, at least has the housing stock, beautiful homes, I was out there just last night, they have so many things working for them that if they

could ever get everyone kind of going in the same direction, but the internal personality conflicts that you have are no different because the people are Black than they are because they're white. I don't know whether or not you can overcome that; it's just going to take a commitment. And the people who really suffer the most are the poor people; that's the thing which is so unfortunate. The people on this Board who haggle back and forth as to whether or not you should have a roof-top restaurant, which they are going to have, and another thing which I find unbelievable because, you know, it's not representative of the poor people, but they're going to have a roof-top restaurant in the Sheffield Farms Building. That's something that's ^{being done just to} ~~just going to~~ placate members of the Board to have a roof-top restaurant. How many people out of Bedford-Stuyvesant, ~~how~~ the kind of people who should be serviced, can afford to go? Now, the argument against that, my argument, or the rebuttal against that, is that we have to upgrade the community; and the way we upgrade is that we have something like that, ^{so} in a sense, they do have something to aspire to.

And maybe there's something to be said for that, but I just think it's a hell of a lot more important that they put a reading clinic out there, or that the kids who leave their houses in the morning have a place to stop off and get breakfast rather than a pretzel or no breakfast at all. Or take that same money and have a summer camp, someone buy some land somewhere and have a summer camp for the kids in Bedford-Stuyvesant to go to ~~camp~~.

GREENE: Okay, let me ask you this, getting back to the thing with Tom Johnston, was there any official or a formal allocation of responsibility within this project which he tried to ease you out of, or was it just a question of, you know, in an informal way?

[Interruption.]

GRAVES: What was the question you were asking me?

GREENE: Well, I was asking you about the structure and whether you had formal jurisdictions within this project or if it was a question of Johnston easing you out in an informal way.

GRAVES: There were any number of areas that I was working on

in as far as Bedford-Stuyvesant is concerned--you have to understand the unique situation I was in. I grew up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, I worked in Bedford-Stuyvesant, I lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant, my wife taught school there, I was still living there, and I was working in Kennedy's office. In addition to that, I had sold real estate, ^{had} done contracting, had done real estate development ⁱⁿ at Bedford-Stuyvesant. So I came with all of those credentials to a project ^{which} /A was dealing directly with what it was that I had done. So on one hand, Ed Logue and I used to spend hours walking up and down Bedford-Stuyvesant, talking about 221 ~~D-3~~ Housing Developments, which no one else in our office knew anything about, ^{on} the other hand, I could walk up and down the street and talk about slum education problems, and ^{knock on the door} tell Al Vann to come on out, and we'd walk down the street talking about education and what was wrong there. I could deal with it in terms of going with I.M. Pei's office, so I worked directly with I.M. Pei's office in terms of the housing structure and the whole thing of just getting, ^{for} instance, Kennedy had the FHA

[Federal Housing Administration] ruling' changed because I made the point to Ed Logue and to I.M. Pei that we couldn't get FHA financing because of the blind room. In a brownstone house the center room in the center of the house has no windows, and the FHA had a strange ruling that said any house that had a room in it, . . . I've told you this before. Well, those kinds of things, and ^{then} on top of that, to know the personalities of the persons who are on that Board and be able to make objective decisions regarding how you should treat one/as ^{group} opposed to another one, and then be able to be the person who could spend time finding the place to actually have the quarters of where we were going to be for the corporation. I was involved in ten different facets of the thing.

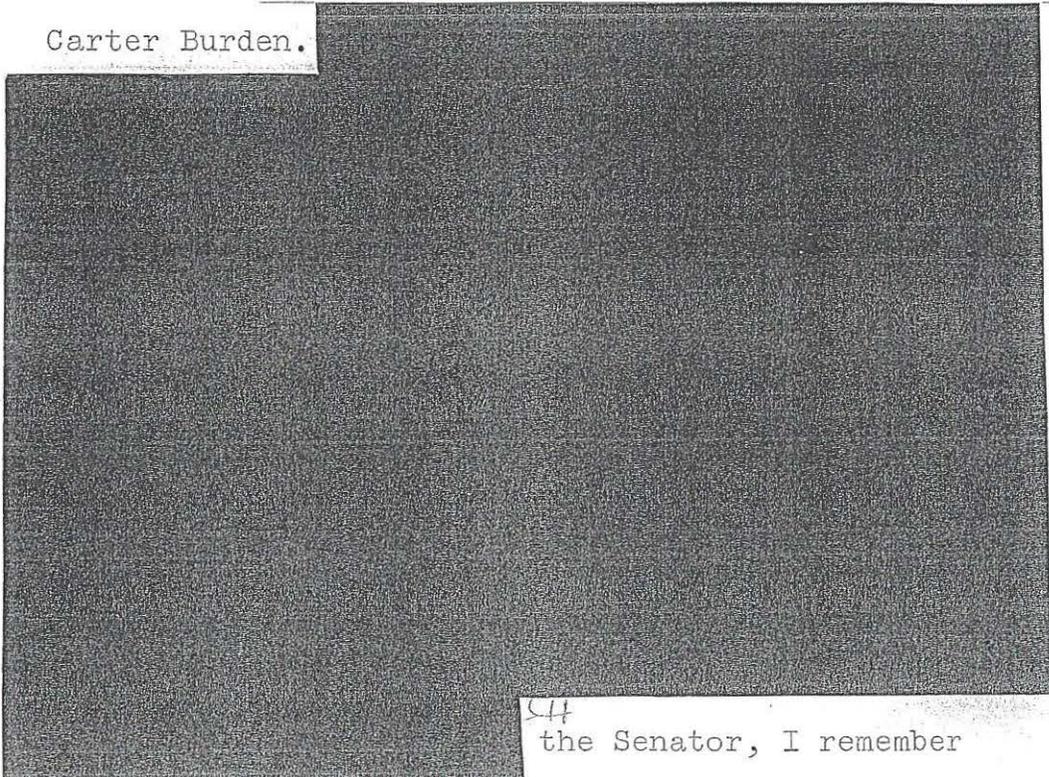
Now, Tom Johnston effectively tried to make the D & S Board, and the relationship with the D and S Board, a thing that he did himself because that was the power. Those were the Benno Schmidts and those were the Douglas Dillons and ^{who's the} person he's working for now, oh André Meyer, because he's working for Benno Schmidt. And he did a very

effective job of that. Now the next person who ~~could have been~~ -- and (William S.) Paley and so forth ~~the next person who could have been~~ and

(James F., Jr.) Oates who was Chairman of the Board [Life Assurance Society of the United States] -- of Equitable, ~~the next person~~ who could have related

to those people in some way, trying to remove from your ^{thinking your} own basic prejudices and plus maybe thinking about what their prejudices were, would have been

Carter Burden.



44 the Senator, I remember

the Senator saying that the reason they have to have two executive directors ^{He} was ~~his~~ saying to me in the

car one day when I said to him, "I just don't think
it's very effective"--I think I've said to you before--
that the white business community would never accept
a Black executive director who's in charge of every-
thing. I remember going home and discussing it
with my wife for an hour and saying, that we have
a long way to go when Senator Kennedy himself is
going to say that, and not, you know, because of
his own prejudices but because he really believes
in it. And, of course, if he could say that, then
Tom Johnston could very well say, "Well, there's no
sense in you trying to talk to the white business
Board. I better do that, and Carter better do it,"
and then he started moving Carter out of it, so that
Carter wasn't effectively doing anything in the Bed-
ford-Stuyvesant project. And then, of course, you
were dealing with a thing ^{that} I was the Black guy and
Frank Thomas saw me as competition. He didn't like
the idea that I was around making decisions and
helping him, although they were good decisions, and
there's no question about the fact that whenever he
got stuck for something, ^{when} ~~where~~ he needed something

resolved, ^{he was} right on the phone to me, "Can I get it resolved?" ^{but} other than that, he didn't want me around. He wanted it to be his thing, and he worked effectively at trying to get me out of it. ~~And~~

H Judge Jones envisaged himself going to Congress, and he was making any moves he possibly could to discredit me in terms of my relationship with him so that he could be involved in ~~trying~~ ^{starting a} to name ~~it~~ he wanted to start ^{to} a move politically, to be able to be so close to the Senator that he could say, "I'd like to see so-and-so get a job, and I'd like you to ^{do} so-and-so for this person and so-and-so for that person." He envisaged coming on board and having such a relationship with the Kennedys that he could really start to move around politically.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I think a lot of credit has to be given to my wife, in terms of helping me to keep my sanity about that time ~~was that~~ ^{was that} my values, in terms of the importance of all of this, and her values were somewhat different in that she was able to say to me that it's only for a short period of time, which it really was. I didn't envisage

working forever for Kennedy. I envisaged, hopefully,
doing what I ~~was doing, that~~ ^{I'm doing right now} and ~~that~~
that ^{I'd} probably ~~of~~ ^{going} to Washington and worked ⁱⁿ
the White House with the staff for a couple of years,
and then I would have left. But, I think, there's
no doubt in my mind that my wife's judgments at
that time in terms of, ~~that~~ ["] people are going to be
people and you just treat them as that, ~~and~~ you try
to work around them; you try to live with the situ-
ation as you have to, ["] kept me from really letting
Judge Jones and other people know exactly what I
thought and how I felt. ~~And,~~ ^Q of course, Lou Douglas, ["]
I think, was particularly helpful in that time
period, also, because there were many times that I
had decided I was just going to have it out with
Frank Thomas and tell him what I really thought.
And to this day, I've never done it, ^{and} to this
day, he still does the same thing of ^{, you know,} having me
hanging on the phone for five minutes waiting to
talk to him, ^A pettyness which is unnecessary, totally
unnecessary. You're just dealing with the human
frailties of life, I guess, ^{where you} we have people who just
kind of have various hang-ups, ^{you'll} and not be able to

overcome those. ^{OK} I don't know whether I'm effectively answering your question about the Tom Johnston thing, but basically what happened was that Tom Johnston used to try to give us various pieces of the project to work on as time went along. What he would try to do is make himself the funnel ^{that} ~~that~~ he would give, say, "Why don't you look at housing," and he'd say to Carter, "Why don't you look at the D and S ^{Board} Board and report back to me." Then he would try to funnel it through and report back to the Senator. In other words, I knew a certain thing, Carter knew a certain thing, he knew everything, so that the Senator had to constantly come to him. It wasn't a matter that I was working on a specific thing where the Senator would come and say, "tell me about that part" ^{it} it was always a matter of you were doing a piece of the whole where he had the whole. He very effectively did that and there was no question in my mind. ^{OK} I think that Carter did ^{not} not just in terms of that Bedford-Stuyvesant project, but there were many, many things that Carter did in that office that I thought he did a very effective job on that

he never really received the credit he should have received. But he was marked because he was Carter Burden and because of his position socially.

GREENE: Let me take a break for one second.

[Interruption]

GREENE: Okay, I was going to ask you, and we may be talking more myth than reality, but my understanding has always been that the Restoration Corporation was supposed to come up with the ideas and the D and S was supposed to advise and help them fund their projects. What I wanted to know was how realistic and competent you think the Restoration group has been in the type of things that they've come up with, and how cooperative the D and S has been in helping them accomplish what they're interested in?

GRAVES: Well, I certainly think that the reality of that certainly was more much a truism after John Doar came on board than while Eli Jacobs was there. When Eli Jacobs was there, it was just a matter of -- I forget his ^{deputy's} ~~deputies~~ name at that time, a young man who's since gone out to Chicago -- almost being like

policemen, ~~we~~ "we're going to give you a hundred thousand dollars, and now we're ⁱgoing to come over and make sure that you all don't pay your mortgages and buy cars with it." They really envisaged themselves as watchdogs over there. ⁹ Their relationship to dealing with those people as equals was not to be believed. I mean there's no doubt in my mind that I've heard people say to me, the white members of Eli Jacobs' staff, that he thought Frank Thomas was "a very bright guy for a Black guy," you know. I mean, so you were dealing with that kind of thing, you were dealing with that kind of attitude, and you were! There's no doubt in ^{my} mind that he saw me as being "a pretty good guy for a Black guy." So it wasn't even a matter of him giving us one point less; [^] he was giving us ten points less. You get a point less for being Black, and with Eli Jacobs you get ten points less for being Black. So you were dealing with that kind of thing. He certainly did not see Frank Thomas as his equal; there was no way he could see! ^E And as far as I was concerned, Frank Thomas was ten times more competent than Eli Jacobs--not just because formally as far as his edu-

cation was concerned, but just in terms of his sensitivity to what he was about. Eli Jacobs was a disastrous choice as being the person out there. When John Doar came on, he moved that Corporation over to the Granada Hotel where both groups are now. It took a while before they started getting adjusted to each other, but then they started getting adjusted to each other and, I guess, it started to flow ^{all right} ~~alright~~, but then they started coming back to the old question of differences, in terms of petty jealousies and who did what, and who had an idea, and ^{whose} ~~who's~~ idea was the best. I understand that they have economic development meetings out there where there's an economic ^{development} committee from D and S and there's another one, ^{^ you know, from} ~~from a splinter~~ within the staff of Restoration, and they practically have wars in those meetings. I mean they get nothing resolved because they're trying to outwit each other and outdo each other in terms of where they're going.

GREENE: Was this the same when the Senator was alive, or has this deteriorated?

GRAVES: I think its deteriorated.

(Begin Side II, Tape # 7)

GREENE: . . . the Restoration Corporation has introduced that the D and S has not gone along with, or that ^{have} they/torn apart or anything of that kind, or is it a more general feeling?

GRAVES: Well, there are various programs, and they had some very bright people out there who really worked and were sincere about moving on projects that they thought could have worked. Erard Moore, who has since resigned and is now at Columbia Law School, was on the D and S Corporation Board, a more sincere and forthright and straight guy you would never want to meet than Erard, in terms of his thinking. He didn't think as a white guy on the D and S Board; he thought as a guy who happened to be white but wanted to see good things for Bedford-Stuyvesant. He wrote some very meaningful programs dealing with health, and likewise with sanitation, none of which were ever implemented, ^{one,} because they couldn't get past the bureaucracy of getting ^{them} moved in, as far as D and S was concerned; and when that did happen, then they were shot down by the ^{Restoration Board} because they did come from D and S. There are constantly duplications of

effort out there in terms of programs that could be initiated ^{on it,} and ^{one} group will start work and the other group will start work on it, and then when they sit down they don't really have a marriage. One of them has got to go and the other, . . . it's not a matter of, "maybe we'll combine the two and ~~see~~ we'll take the best of each," it's just a matter of haggling it out as to who's they're going to approve, and usually it ends up being Restoration because Frank Thomas is in ~~end~~ ^{fact --}, John Doar is in a very, very difficult position out there. I'm surprised he's lasted as long as he has out there because Frank Thomas is in fact representative of the community, and in any battle it ends up being a thing that Frank Thomas is probably going to win.

Now, the other thing which Lou Douglass had pointed out to me, which I wasn't aware of before he left there, ~~and that is,~~ ^{that there is} in fact, although ~~an~~ ^{a not} outspoken faction in terms of the D and S Board, there are those persons who support the John Doar side of the camp within the D and S Board, and there are those persons who support the Frank Thomas side of

the camp in the D and S Board. Benno Schmidt is very much on the Frank Thomas side; Frank Thomas can make no mistakes at all in terms of what Benno Schmidt thinks. On the other hand, John Doar's ally, as far as the D and S Board is concerned, would be André Meyer. I forget after that how it splits down, but the persons who have been closest to what's going on and that ^{you} he would turn to and say, I'd like your assistance or value and I want your judgment and I want your vote and ^{you} you get that kind of cleavage where you have that thing of who supports who.

GREENE: Do you consider Meyer and Benno Schmidt the most active, and have they made the greatest contribution, would you say?

GRAVES: Yes.

GREENE: Do you have, I'm sure you do, have, a personal opinion of the kinds of things they've done? Are they both positive, do you think, in their contributions?

GRAVES: I think Benno Schmidt has made more of a contribution. He's much more realistic and much closer to knowing what's going on and meaningful; you know, you don't have to spell it out for him. I think with André

Meyer, he just kind of comes out, he looks at it, and John Doar says to him, "I think I'd like to buy this block of houses, if you could figure out a way for us to do it." He says, "Okay, I'll figure out a way," and he goes back and ^{says to} sets his own staff, [^]remember I think I told John Doar last Saturday we were going to buy a block of houses, figure out a way to do it." Whereas Benno Schmidt really goes back and ponders it and looks at it and has made much more of a contribution.

GREENE: You know, I'm trying really to stay in the framework of Robert Kennedy's role, ^{in it} even though I know it's hard to restrict it.

GRAVES: Well, the cleavage I'm talking about really took place after Kennedy's death, much more so than during. When Kennedy was there he kind of kept everybody reasonably honest because you know everybody was so busy vying for situations with him.

GREENE: Did you still find that these two people were the most active, or is that a later ^{development?} thought?

GRAVES: Even in the beginning, yeah, right. Douglas Dillon, who was originally the chairman, and Benno Schmidt

was doing his work for him.

GREENE: Because he didn't have the time, or he just wasn't that interested?

GRAVES: Both. I think he came on board because it was Kennedy and the whole thing and after that it just sort of. . . .

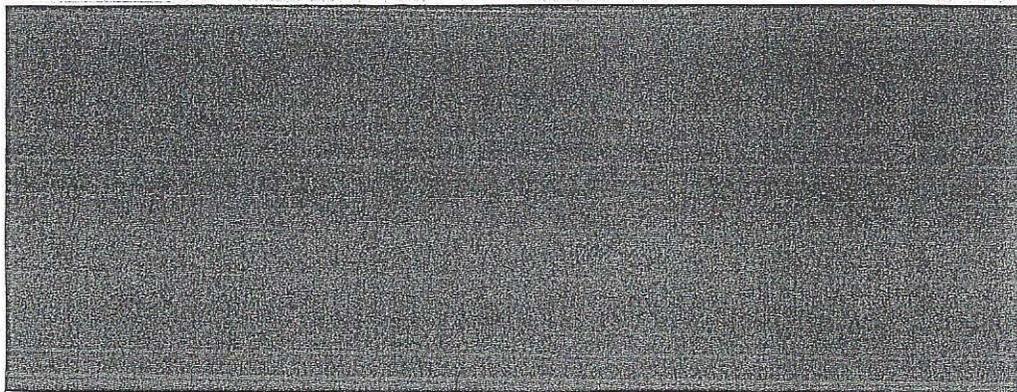
Now, I can't really tell you what ~~(Mrs. Ethel S. Kennedy)~~ ^[Ethel S. Kennedy] Ethel's commitment has been. I know that Ethel and Benno Schmidt are rather close because Tom Johnston orchestrates that. He works for Benno Schmidt, so obviously it happens. But ^{has} I'm sure that Ethel's being on board/lent something to keeping those guys honest, and I'm sure a number of those businessmen by now would have resigned were it not for the fact that they feel an obligation to Kennedy and to Ethel that they're still there.

What you're trying to find out, which I want to kind of clarify a little bit, is how close or how aware or ~~how aware~~ was the Senator of many of the problems that existed as far as the boys were concerned and the internal conflict. I should say to

you that he was very far removed from being aware ^{of} that that kind of stuff, and Tom Johnston worked overtime to try to be sure he didn't necessarily have to be exposed to it.

GREENE: Was Tom Johnston, though, aware of the things in the same way that, let's say, you and Carter Burden were, or did he have a total different view of it?

GRAVES: Oh, he was aware and I think contributed to it.



GREENE: Well, I really only have one other thing about this which I wanted to ask you and that is, if you ever got complaints, directly or indirectly, that the Senator was not doing enough or was not as personally involved in this project as he should have been, and if you yourself had any problem getting him to act on things that you thought were important and just getting access to him in general, besides the problem that you describe ^{of} getting through Tom Johnston?

GRAVES: I can't think of too many times when I had something

to say to the Senator. It wasn't a matter that he was not available to me to answer a question or to listen to something if I had to discuss it with him. It was a matter that Tom Johnston, it's just a job of funneling everything through him and trying to backstop without going to the Senator or being there to discuss various things with him, ~~that~~ it actually got to the point that you really started to say to yourself, "I wonder if this is important enough to discuss with the Senator?" And so when you had something to discuss with him in your own mind, you had pretty well made up your mind that it was probably going to be a decision on how to stop World War III before you decided that you were going to go talk with him. ^{And that was a direct result of...} That kind of thing did not exist in the Washington office, I might say. In the Washington office, those guys were all independent, when they had something to discuss, they went in and told him about it. Their work on a project was their thing. But I mean, with them, we were like Tom Johnston's children in that New York office. It was ridiculous.

GREENE: You wouldn't circumvent him by, let's say, going to [Joseph F.] Joe Dolan or someone like that in the Senator's office, if not directly to the Senator?

GRAVES: From time to time, I'd just pick up the phone and call the Senator directly, and ~~a line came in but~~ ^{I can remember that} a couple of times we did that, Carter Burden and Tom Johnston used to have, I mean, almost fist fights in the office. I mean, they had shouting and screaming arguments in there toward the end which were absolutely not to be believed. I should say to you that I didn't feel that degree of security, in terms of if I had wanted to stay and be there for a while, that I could afford to take on Tom Johnston personally, because I was convinced that Tom Johnston had enough clout that I would literally have had to call a press conference on the steps of that Senate office and say that there were inequities going on before I would have been able to secure my own position as far as working in that office was concerned because I would know that Tom Johnston would ~~drive~~ ^{contrive} something through that would have had myself and anyone else out of there. ^{without a doubt in my mind}

Tim Hogan^e, who worked in that office[^] who we haven't even discussed at all, I don't think, in any of these discussions[^] was dumped out of that office, and there's no doubt in my mind that Tom Johnston played a major role in that. We were literally shocked when he was fired out of there^o he was fired by the Senator, and what we were finally^{was} told/that Tim Hogan^e made the Senator nervous^o and[^] we're convinced that Tim Hogan^e made the Senator nervous because Tom Johnston told him to make the Senator nervous^o because^o Tim Hogan^e was a very decent person--I don't know if you ever met him--^{who} but a very first-rate guy^o/really hustled and tried to get along and ended up getting himself fired. He did as much as anybody did in that office, but his problem was that the Senator had hired him and Tom Johnston had not played a role in hiring him. Whereas Tom Johnston had played a role in my being hired, he had not played a role^{then} when Dall Forsythe^{who} worked there, Tom Johnston had played a role in hiring him, so, these were two people out of four, that he could definitely kind of keep a thumb

on because he had been there. ²¹⁰ But he definitely
felt uncomfortable ^{about} with Carter because the Senator
had hired Carter personally, and he didn't like it ^{and}
and then, of course, Carter's social position didn't
help any ^{and} because the Senator, ^(Bürden) or Ethel would
invite Amanda/and Carter down because of socially
who they were, and likewise because they were a
young, bright couple to have around and Tom Johnston
wouldn't be invited on the weekend. You know, you're
only dealing with human beings ^{and} all of a sudden
you look up and the guy that's supposed to be
working for you, or you think he's working for you ^{scobol}
although we always tried to believe that we were
working for the Senator, ^{but} in fact, what happened
in that New York office ^{was} we worked for Tom Johnston,
which I don't think was necessarily advantageous to
getting the maximum effort out of that office ^{by}/having
to funnel everything and backstop everything wondering
or not whether/Tom Johnston was going to be happy ^{with it} And
a guy like him ^{that came out wearing the} of the
, in fact, a white hat in most/situations
was/Tom Johnston. I know that, ^{how} do you stop this
thing? [Interruption]

~~(Interruption)~~

GREENE: You were talking off the tape about you and Carter Burden going to ^{J.} [William] vanden Heuval^e.

GRAVES: I remember that Carter Burden and I went, on a couple of occasions, to Bill vanden Heuval^e and said that we're having a very difficult time trying to get around Tom Johnston and to be able to go to the Senator, and for the Senator to recognize what our commitment is and what our involvement is in the office because of Tom backstopping everything. I remember two or three occasions Carter and I both went together and talk to Bill vanden Heuval^e about it, or approached him^{ed} separately. I mean, Carter and I ^{always} almost used to feed each other little bits of information about how we were going to try to get around Tom Johnston. It just seemed to me that that didn't make that office particularly, again, effective when Carter and I had to spend time focusing about how we were going to circumvent Tom Johnston in order to get on with what we wanted to do. I just think it's rather unfortunate.

GREENE: For one thing, why would you go to a guy like Bill

vanden Heuval^e?

GRAVES: Because he was a personal friend of the Senator's⁵ and we^{were} rather close.

GREENE: But it was on a personal level^o he really had no function in the office, did he?

GRAVES: No, he did not. The things that he did for the Senator, he did because ^{it} he was a Senator^o and, of course, the charisma of being able to say, "I'm doing it for Robert Kennedy" ["] has something to play in it. I mean, he could call vanden Heuval^e up at ³ ~~three~~ o'clock in the morning and vanden Heuval^e would get dressed and come to where^tver he was. I'm not sure that ~~ninety-nine~~⁹⁹ percent of the people he would call wouldn't have done the same thing ^{for Senator} or ~~felt the same for~~ Kennedy.

GREENE: What was vanden Heuval^e's response? Did he ever take it to the Senator, or did he offer any suggestions?

GRAVES: I think the time when I ^{saw} ~~spent~~ the most daylight and really got a chance to get away from Tom Johnston, and where Carter and I just really effectively cut him out completely, was during the cam-

paign. He used to call us up ~~and still want~~ --he was
in Washington and working on whatever it was that
[Stephen E.] ~~(Steven)~~ Steve Smith had him was doing and trying to call
us up and tell us how to run the New York operation.
Well, we just didn't/^{even}take his phone calls. We just
said "Zap", we're not going to do/^{it}any more, "we just
ignored him.

GREENE: But what about vanden Heuvel particularly? How did
he respond to your criticism? Do you think he was
aware of the situation?

GRAVES: He was aware ^{Not only was} because vanden Heuvel ^e was aware of what
the two of us could do ⁻⁻⁻ because when vanden Heuvel ^e
got out to Oregon, one of the first things he did
when he recognized he needed somebody to do commun-
ity organizing for him, he had me out there doing
it for him. Vanden Heuvel ^e was very much aware, ^e he
wasn't as effective. It was the same thing as his
mentioning over a drink to Kennedy, "Hey, you got
problems with Earl Graves and Carter Burden not
getting along with Tom Johnston." It wasn't a
realistic thing to expect that he was going to
really accomplish something by trying to talk to
Kennedy about that because here's the Senator worrying

about how he can repatriate prisoners of war out of Vietnam and, you know, meanwhile, we're talking about some nonsense about two guys who are staff assistants at ^{\$6500}~~\$6500~~ dollars a year, though actually my salary was twice that. But it was insignificant; it was inconsequential to the total picture where Robert Kennedy was going, the fact that Tom Johnston who himself was . . . if Tom Johnston himself was not insecure, we would not have had these problems. So you're dealing with four guys or five guys ^{or}~~over~~ the whole damn staff, sixty-five guys, totally insecure, and no matter how you cut it, I'm convinced that there was nobody on that staff who was totally secure in terms of where they were going or what they were doing. I mean I saw occasions where Joe Dolan was obviously insecure in terms of his own position, so I don't think there's anyone who was ever so certain of his position on that staff that he just thought he had it made.

GREENE: I have nothing else unless you have something to add. I think we've kind of run the gamut.

GRAVES: I can't think of anything else ² if I do I'll give you a buzz.

GREENE: Right.

GRAVES: If you have any questions that are not clear to you.

[Interruption]

GRAVES: I think that I've [^] I know that I've tried to be as honest and candid as I possibly could with you in terms of these interviews because I thought that for posterity, whenever it is that these tapes are viewed and someone looks at them, that it's important that history record the fact that the prejudices that people would think were not there were ^{in fact} that there to a certain extent, /the problems that people will think were not there, were in fact there, ~~because~~ I think ~~it's~~ unreal and it doesn't do credit or is not creditable. ^{to} People in future generations if, in fact, something that what we've talked about here is that significant, ~~that~~ they think that there was some magic which happened within the Kennedy office, and that there was some magic in terms of the things that he accomplished, and that in fact, none of the problems that exist in other programs

and in other areas and in other offices existed.

(10) I feel a sense that where I am today, Robert Kennedy made it very possible, and many of the abilities I have today in terms of being able to accomplish the things that I can in the course of a twelve hour day, Robert Kennedy's office made possible because they taught me how to get things done. But

But I think that in terms of how soon I would want these tapes to be available for public dissemination, I think that in terms of my own career, where I'm going, hopefully where I'm going, and my own career in terms of my family and my children, I don't think it adds anything to have these tapes produced for public dissemination for a long period of time to come. I don't know how you all are establishing how or what when you say a long period of time to come, but I certainly think after my death.

GREENE: It's completely up to you, you know. You have control over them, and if you want to make it after your death or after your children's death. . . .

GRAVES: I think that after my children's death is very realistic. I mean, I'm talking about forty or fifty years at least. I think that they're finding out things now about Abraham Lincoln that are still significant. So I don't think that it's going to mean anything one way or another, and I think it just will dim in some way and put a blemish on what Robert Kennedy represented and what he represents to the people of the United States.

GREENE: No, and, of course, we don't have to