Interview with **John Doar**
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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in ***bold italics*** was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize.*

00:00:03:00

[camera roll 178]

[sound roll 1142]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: FLAGS, STICKS.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: INTERESTED IN HAVING, COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR, YOUR VISITS TO MISSISSIPPI IN '61 TO, TO INVESTIGATE THE ACTS OF INTIMIDATION.

Doar: [coughs] Well early in '61 we had already had several counties under investigation for voter discrimination and—but we hadn't done much investigating in Mississippi. And so another lawyer in the division, Bob Owen and I, got a hold of a number of county maps in Mississippi. We knew, of course, the voter statistics where there were large numbers of blacks living in a county and where there were no registered voters. And we arranged to meet Medgar Evers at his house on a Saturday morning, I think it was in the spring of 1961, and we flew down to Jackson, Bob and I, and went to his house early the next morning, it was a Saturday morning. And sat around the table, kitchen table, with he and Mrs. Evers and showed him the counties that we were interested in, this was the counties principally, on that trip, from Sou—Southern Mississippi, the Southern half of Mississippi. And we asked him

who were the black persons in those counties who had attempted to register to vote and where did they live? And he was able to give us the names of black leaders. One or two black leaders in each county, and had pretty well on his fingertips the efforts that they had made to try to get registered to vote in those counties. So [coughs] we then set out, the two of us, across Southern Mississippi and to, to find out where these people were and, and locate them, and we found them out in the fields plowing or, or sitting on their front porches or, or tending to their gardens. And went up and introduced ourselves and said we were from the Justice Department and could they tell us their experiences with respect to registering. And that's how the Justice Department program in Mississippi got started. We came back from that trip with enough information about five or six counties in southwestern—southern Mississippi to indicate clearly that we were going to be able to build cases of voter discrimination. Hard, specific, concrete factual cases in, in these counties. And as I recall it, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee had been encouraged by some members of the Kennedy administration to concentrate on voter registration in Mississippi. They at that time were protesting sit-ins, restaurants and lunch counters, and [coughs] the question was whether they should have a broad effort to break down the caste system through protests against all forms of racial discrimination or whether they should focus on voting. And some of the students at least decided that they would focus on voting and they picked Southwest Mississippi which was the area around McComb and Liberty south of Natchez, east of Hattiesburg. And [coughs] Bob Moses was one of the people that was down in Mississippi, what's the matter?

00:04:16:00

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T ACTUALLY WANT TO INTERRUPT YOU BUT I DID WANT TO SAY LOOK AT ME. DON'T LOOK AT HIM.

Doar: OK, OK.

INTERVIEWER: DON'T LOOK AT THEM, I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THE ROOM.

Doar: All right.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S, LET'S PICK UP WITH THIS IDEA. COULD YOU, COULD YOU TELL US WHAT KIND OF STORIES PEOPLE WERE TELLING YOU, OF IN—INTIMIDATION, AND WHAT WERE—

Doar: Well, we were—the stories of intimidation, we weren't getting a great number of stories of intimidation at that time. The stories were that they were n—just not permitted to register. They weren't permitted to go in if registration was a prerequisite to voting. And, so long as, as the official, the officials—so long as the officials of Mi—of Mississippi could keep blacks from registering and voting then there wasn't any need for a lot of intimidation. And so we didn't get in that first trip a lot of complaints about intimidation.

00:05:15:00

INTERVIEWER: THEY WERE JUST FLAT OUT TURNED DOWN?

Doar: They were just flat out turned down, and they'd be turned down not once, they'd be turned down the next year, and they'd be turned down the next year, and then something would happen again and one way or another they'd be told or the word would be passed out it's not time yet, you can't do it, it's too early, wait. That, those were the kind of, of rebuffs that we, we received—

00:05:41:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WERE YOU HEARING IN THE HERBERT LEE CASE IN PARTICULAR?

Doar: Well, [coughs] you jump ahead. Then the students went to southwest Mississippi to encourage people to try to register. And as, and they started to have meetings and Bob Moses took somebody, I think, a, a young woman up to register in Liberty and he was attacked on the street and, and, and beaten. And we went down there then to, to investigate the response of the white community. The white—certain white people at least, to organized [sic] efforts for blacks to become registered. And, it was in connection with that second or third time that I was in southwest Mississippi that summer that I met Bob Moses and, and [coughs] we went to a, a, a black person's house in rural, I can't remember the county now, but it was where Herbert Lee lived. And, we were told—I would asked [sic] about efforts by white persons to keep blacks from registering and one of the examples I got was I think the man's name was Steptoe—

INTERVIEWER: SIR, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO START THAT AGAIN, YOU JUST HIT YOUR MICROPHONE.

Doar: Well let me stop a minute.

INTERVIEWER: STOP PLEASE.

Doar: —let me stop if I could.

[cut]

00:07:16:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: HIT IT.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: JUSTB A MOMENT.

INTERVIEWER: YOU READY? AND AGAIN THIS ISN'T HERE YOU'RE JUST TALKING TO ME.

Doar: All right.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Doar: Anyway, Bob Moses and I drove over to Mr. Steptoe's house and, and I asked him [coughs] about what the experience was of the black people in that area and that holding meetings wh—where the SNCC kids were encouraging people to go up to the registrar's office and register. And he said or we learned that, that there people coming to the outside of the meetings and taking the license numbers down of the people that, that were at the meetings. Now [coughs] in the winter before, I had been in Haywood, in Fayette counties, Tennessee where there had been a co—co— [coughs] comprehensive and—efforts at economic intimidation by forcing sharecroppers off the land who'd attempted to register to vote. And this was the f—first example of economic intimidation that we'd carefully investigated. And so the taking down of license numbers [coughs] and getting the names of people suggested that, that there was an effort or might be an effort in doing the same thing in southern Mississippi, southwest Mississippi. And I asked Mr. Steptoe if he knew [pause] or he saw the people that were taking down the license numbers and he said he didn't, but Herbert Lee did. And as I recall it, we visited a little bit longer there and I asked him who the most powerful white person was in that area and he said a man named Hearst who was a state senator, a state legislator. And in talking to him he said, that he'd grown up with Mr. Hearst and he was I think a tenant on Hearst's farm and that, that was just information that I got. Well then we went down the road to try to find Herbert Lee, Bob and I, and, and when we got to Herbert Lee's house, which was maybe five or six miles down this country road, he was not there. He'd gone off to see relatives or was, was gone for the Sunday afternoon. So I had to go back to Washington and when I got back to Washington at ten o'clock the following night there was a note on my desk that Herbert Lee had been killed. And I learned that Mr. Hearst had—there had been a confrontation and that Mr. Hearst had, had—claimed that he'd been attacked with a tire, tire iron and, and he had to respond by, by killing him. And that's the, that's the—my r—recollection of the Herbert Lee situation.

00:10:23:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT KIND OF DIFFICULTIES DID YOU FACE IN TERMS OF PROSECUTING CASES OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE WHETHER THEY WERE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY LINKED TO THESE VOTER REGISTRATION ISSUES?

Doar: [coughs] Well, we didn't have the—the prosecutions were very difficult. First, you had a problem of whether or not there was a federal violation and second, of all you had a problem of proof—

00:10:54:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Doar: —the—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY. WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO CHANGE FILM HERE. PICK UP WITH THAT VERY SAME—

00:10:59:00

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AT FLAGS. STICKS.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: YOU WERE LISTING FOR US THE KINDS OF DIFFICULTIES YOU FACED IN, IN, IN TRYING TO PROSECUTE THESE CASES.

Doar: Well we had a problem of federal jurisdiction and then second, we had a problem of proof. And so that in ni—the [coughs] result of those problems resulted in the 1957 Civil Rights Act which provided for injunction suits in cases of voter discrimination or intimidation and if there were threats, intimidation or coercion that prevented black citizens from registering to vote then you could bring civil suits against the persons who perpetrated that intimidation. And we in the civil rights division used the civil remedy, the injunctive remedy, to try to put a— [coughs] some kind of control on intimidation pending the time that we could get enough black people registered and voting so that the intimidation would stop. That was the, that was the strategy.

00:12:19:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU SAID THAT, THAT THOUGH, THAT THERE WERE CASES IN WHICH IT DIDN'T WORK, YOU WERE DESCRIBING WHAT HAPPENED WITH HERBERT LEE, THAT, THAT CASE—

Doar: Well, the, the, the, to have somebody—see somebody get killed of course it didn't work, but—the problem was—is that we were dealing with a caste system and we were trying to change the caste system through the processes of the law and not through a revolution and not through a military force. And [coughs] what we had to do was to build enough confidence in the, in the country and enough education in the country so that the, [coughs] the law would, would bring about this change. And you couldn't, it couldn't happen overnight, it couldn't happen instantaneously, and when it didn't happen instantaneously there were great risks that some innocent, unfortunate black person would get killed or get hurt or a building would get burned, and it was a terrible concern to all of us all the time. It's, but what we—made us work harder, not so much at the prosecution of that, of the person who was alleged to have perpetrated that crime, but to change the system so it wouldn't happen again.

00:13:51:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU KNOW, I WONDER IF WE SHOULD HAVE YOU DESCRIBE THAT SYSTEM. PARTICULARLY OUR YOUNGER VIEWERS ARE NOT GOING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT SOUTHERN CASTE SYSTEM MEANT. WHAT WERE THE OBSTACLES, WHAT WERE THE, THE, THE WEAPONS THAT, THAT THE WHITE SOCIETY HAD?

Doar: Well it wasn't—first of all—describing the system is not so much talking about the weapons or the, or the obstacles, it's the situation. And black citizens were second-class from cradle til grave. They went to segregated schools. They used segregated bathrooms. They sat in the back of segregated buses. They were buried—they had different color birth certificates. They were buried in different cemeteries. Everything was second-class. They couldn't vote. They couldn't have the same freedom that white people did a-and it's a, it's a terrible system, a caste system, and it was a, you know it was a monumental disgrace for the country. And the weapons that, that the southern white people used were to keep the blacks from voting. And once the Justice Department and the civil rights organizations began an effort to force the white officials, state officials, to permit blacks to voting then is when the intimidation occurred or when it started to build up. And our objective was to try to keep the intimidation at a minimum and to stop it if we could while we built up the registration and voting of blacks.

00:15:40:00

INTERVIEWER: I WONDER IF YOU COULD TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT, THIS IS, THIS IS PICKING UP ON AN EARLIER THOUGHT. YOU MENTIONED MR. STEPTOE GOING TO SEE HERBERT LEE, AMZIE—I WAS THINKING OF AMZIE MOORE, YOU MENTIONED MEDGAR EVERS, COULD YOU, WHAT DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE KIND OF WORK THAT THEY WERE DOING? HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THEIR POSITION OR THEIR COURAGE?

Doar: Well they were marvelous people, I mean they were the, the people that we met, the civil rights lawyers, the black citizens, men and women, that we met in the rural South, were just marvelous individuals. I mean, they were, they were hard workers. They were friendly. They were, they were remarkably tolerant, and they—we just, we just had great affection, great respect for the people we knew and, and of course we came to know a great many of them because our methods of investigation was to go out in the field ourselves and talk to people. And when Bob Owen and I were down there on that trip we, I think, we probably spent ten days in the field just in one trip. I think, I usually spent a hundred and seventy-five, a hundred and fifty, a hundred and seventy five days a year in the South, and many of my lawyers did the same. We left Washington, we always left on Friday night and came back two weeks in the Sunday nights, so we were gone a full sixteen days.

00:17:17:00

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU FEEL THAT YOU EVER PUT THEM IN DANGER BY VISITING THEM?

Doar: No, I don't think so. I never felt that way. I never felt that way. I would, I would say that the civil rights di—lawyers had considerable respect from, from the white community. I mean we didn't—we, we believed we were law enforcement officers, we, we, we kept our own counsel, we met our responsibilities, and we strove to win the respect of the, of the white citizens in the South. And, now I've got to be honest with you, when I went— left Mr. Medgar Evers's house, I didn't wear a Justice department tag on my, on my shirt, and I didn't ask any white people for directions. That's why we had the maps. We went where we had to go in rural Mississippi without asking anybody for directions. And it wasn't, it wasn't that hard if you had a, if you understood anything about rural areas and I do because that's where I grew up, in a rural area. So—but as far as putting people in danger, I don't think we ever thought that that was a problem.

INTERVIEWER: OK. I'M GOING TO JUMP AHEAD, I'M GOING TO COME BACK TO VOTER REGISTRATION IN DETAIL, STOP PLEASE.

[cut]

00:18:55:00

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK BEFORE WE GET TO SEPTEMBER AND, AND THE ACTUAL MEREDITH ENROLLMENT, HOW CLOSELY WERE YOU FOLLOWING THAT CASE, IT TOOK EIGHTEEN MONTHS, HOW CLOSELY WERE YOU FOLLOWING?

Doar: [coughs] Well I wasn't following closely at all because my job was, was the voter cases and intimidation cases and I wasn't as closely related to the school cases. We didn't have any jurisdiction to bring school cases, at that time, and we only entered school cases as friends of the court or if there was a violation of a federal court order. And, so other persons, other lawyers in the division were tracking the Meredith case.

INTERVIEWER: OK, I'M GOING TO STOP AND CHANGE.

[cut]

00:19:46:00

[slate]

[change to camera roll 180]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: ROLLING. FLAGS. STICK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: YOU WERE GOING TO GIVE US A PICTURE OF JAMES MEREDITH AT THIS FIRST MEETING.

Doar: [coughs] Well during—at the time that James Meredith was about to try to enter the University, I was in Hattiesburg in connection with a voter case against the registrar of, of Forest County. And I was before three Court of Appeals judges who, when the issue was whether or not the registrar should be put in contempt, James Meredith's and another lawyer from the Justice Department had gone to the University of Mississippi and had been met there by the governor and been told that he wasn't going to be registered and I got a call from Burke Marshall and he said that the Attorney General wanted me to go to Missis—to New Orleans to meet James Meredith and then to accompany him to the University because they were gonna try to register him again. And at the same time they were moving legally to get orders against various officials of the state not to interfere with that registration. And—so I flew to, to New Orleans and met James Meredith and then several days later we went to Jackson to try to register at the State office building—at the office of the Board of Regents. James McShane, the Chief U.S. Marshal, was with me and the three of us flew up in a small border patrol plane from New Orleans and landed at the Jackson airport and took a car into the S-State office building and went up and tried to register there, but was again barred by the governor of the state. And then we went back to New Orleans and then flew to Memphis and made several aborted trips to try to get into the University and, finally, on a Sunday afternoon, which this must, may have been ten days later, or five days later, I can't remember, we went into the University, James Meredith and I did, and, and into a dormitory quarters there by arrangement with the officials at the University and then I lived with James Meredith for the next three or four weeks.

00:22:24:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT, WHAT WAS HE LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST MET HIM? WAS HE, WAS HE—

Doar: Good guy.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, YOU'RE GOING—COULD YOU USE HIS NAME PLEASE.

Doar: Well, James, James Meredith was a good guy and we got along fine. He was interesting and—course he was very stubborn and you had, you had to admire him, courageous, determined, fearless. Kept his own counsel but was friendly and, and when I, when I was at the University we ate together, three meals a day. I traveled with him to class. I didn't walk right along with him because we wanted to give him as much of a natural—like other student we could, but we were always very close by, a group of marshals and myself, because there was, at any moment, there could be some reaction or response that could let things get out of hand.

INTERVIEWER: DID HE, DID HE RESENT AT ALL HAVING TO HAVE THIS? IT WAS ALMOST LIKE HAVING TO, TO, TO WATCH HIM, TO NURSEMAID HIM. DID HE RESENT THAT, DID HE FEEL THAT?

Doar: I don't have any recollection that he ever showed that to me. He may have been frustrated and he may have—after he thought about it for a while, had resentments and bitterness, I'm sure he did. But he didn't in his personal relations with me there was none of that.

00:23:52:00

INTERVIEWER: I WONDERED IF HE ALSO MIGHT HAVE EVER EXPRESSED WHETHER HE FELT THAT TO SOME EXTENT THAT HE, THAT IT GOT TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM. I MEAN, THERE HE'D FOUGHT FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS VIRTUALLY BY HIMSELF WITH THE NAACP AND THEN SUDDENLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS FLYING HIM IN AND OUT AND THERE'S MARSHALS AND PLANES AND EVERYTHING, I WONDERED IF HE SUDDENLY HAD A SENSE OF HIS, HIS STORY BEING PULLED FROM HIMSELF?

Doar: I don't think so. You, you, you wonder about whether he felt that, that the case had been taken away from him because there was so much effort to support him. I don't believe, I, I never detected that, I never detected that kind of attitude. Later on when things didn't go so well or when he got discouraged he may have expressed those feelings, but he never did to me in those early days.

00:24:46:00

INTERVIEWER: BEFORE WE—IN THAT, IN THAT PERIOD OF TIME YOU WERE IN JACKSON AND THEN IN OXFORD FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS THERE.

Doar: Right.

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU SEE THE GATHERING VIOLENCE IN THE, IN THE CITY, DID YOU, DID YOU TRY TO WARN ANYONE THAT THERE WAS AN UGLY CROWD GATHERING?

Doar: Well you, you didn't have, [laughs] you didn't have to warn anybody, you could, you could see that there was an ugly crowd gathering. We went down and, and there was a—there was a crowd around the state office building there was a, a—when we went down the first time to, to Oxford, of course, the, the sheriffs of many of the counties blocked the road along with the lieutenant governor. And there were people along the side of the roads hollering and shouting. The next time we went down they—the department concluded it just wasn't safe for us to continue with that kind of a, a, a force of thirty or forty marshals. So we returned to Memphis and went back the next day with, unannounced, and then with a considerable greater force of marshals.

00:26:14:00

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU DESCRIBE FOR US THE KIND OF CONVOY OF YOU ALL COMING IN TO, TO BRING JAMES MEREDITH IN. I MEAN, WHAT KIND OF FORCE WAS THERE SURROUNDING HIM?

Doar: Well it, [coughs] the, the, there wasn't any big convoy of, of, of, I mean maybe there were four or five cars in the ones that I was with, as I recall it. There was several hundred marshals and when they got onto the campus the marshals gathered at the Lyceum building which is the main office building at the University. Meredith's quarters were two blocks away from that and there was a small group of, of five or eight marshals there. The confrontation that evening occurred down at the main building. I don't think many students, if any, knew where Meredith was staying on the campus. And there was no unrest or violence or noise or hollering or crowds around the dormitory room where James Meredith was that Sunday night. It was—nobody knew he was there or where he was. Except people knew that he was on the campus.

00:27:28:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME JUST BACK UP—ASK YOU ONE MORE QUESTION ABOUT BEING TURNED AWAY AND THEN WE'LL COME TO THAT, THAT NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 30th. DO YOU, DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS WERE WHEN YOU CAME TO JACKSON THAT FIRST TIME?

Doar: Sure, my instructions were that if I went to the registrar, to the Board of Regents' office that they would be, they would, there would be somebody from the University there prepared to register James Meredith and I was to see that it got done. That was the instructions.

00:28:00:00

INTERVIEWER: BUT THE—IT DIDN'T HAPPEN. NOW WERE YOU SURPRISED?

Doar: Well, you know, I don't, I don't exactly remember what my emotion was at the time, I mean, I was, ***I've got to admit, I was surprised when I got to the door of the regent's office and, and when the door opened there was, on the threshold, was the governor of the state of Mississippi there blocking the door. I've got to say to you that I didn't anticipate that. And he had a proclamation and he read it, in which the end line was, I refuse to register you under the authority of the laws of the state of Mississippi. So we left.*** And then we went back the next day, I mean, and there was no lack of resolution on the federal government's part that James Meredith was going to be registered. There was no question about the fact that that was gonna happen.

00:28:59:00

INTERVIEWER: THE SECOND DAY WHEN YOU GO BACK AND YOU'RE TURNED AWAY BY THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR THERE WERE REPORTS OF A SHOVING MATCH, NOW, IS THIS TRUE?

Doar: Well, there was a very little shoving match. James McShane was the, is the, was the chief marshal and, and he's got the map of Ireland on his face and he's, he's not the kind of a person that you do much shoving with. But there was, it was clear that we weren't going to be able to, to—I think there may have been three marshals and, and James Meredith and myself it was clear that we weren't going to be able to go through that group of sheriffs that were blocking the road and once that—somebody made McShane made an attempt to do that, and it was clear he wasn't gonna get through, our instructions were we weren't going to try to run over 'em.

00:29:51:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU, DID YOU EVER THINK THAT, SPEAKING OF, OF THIS VIOLENCE OR POSSIBLE VIOLENCE, DID YOU EVER THINK THAT MEREDITH MIGHT NOT LIVE TO ENROLL IN ALL THIS? WAS THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE THAT, THAT—

Doar: No, no I did not. And the, the, [coughs] I mean, James Meredith was not in any of the confrontations where there, in my opinion, there was any risk of danger to his life or anyone else's life or to their safety. The closest we came to any kind of violence was one night in the—

00:30:35:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Doar: —school cafeteria when—we always ate, he and I, together—

INTERVIEWER: SORRY, WE JUST HAD A CAMERA ROLLOUT HERE.

00:30:42:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 181]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AT FLAGS. SIX.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU DESCRIBE FOR US THAT, THAT NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 30TH, WHERE YOU WERE AND WHAT YOU SAW.

Doar: [coughs] Well after I, after I brought James Meredith into the university and got him settled at the quarters where he was gonna stay, where his room, where his room was then I went down to the Lyceum building and at that time the marshals had formed a, a line around two and a half sides of the building, shoulder to shoulder. And there was a, a crowd of, of students in the road next to the, maybe six or eight feet from the marshals, on the outer perimeter of this square. And the, the students were shouting and, and hollering at the marshals and trying to get them upset and ruffled, and the marshals were just standing there. They were in—they had helmets and, and, I think, [coughs] it was about dusk, and then—as usually happened in one of those demonstrations somebody would push forward and bump into a marshal and, and then it—the st—they started to, to get mean and get ugly. And it got dark. And the, the, the marshals did a very excellent job of, of keeping cool and, and, and preserving the, the building and not getting overrun and you could sense that there was a—getting to be more of a, more of a buildup of people coming on to the University, not just students, but outsiders. And you could tell if you went back in the Lyceum building and listened to the radio that there was a—the radio was going every five minutes about what was happening at Oxford and you could sense that people were moving into Oxford from all over Mississippi. And there was some gunfire and some, of course, tear gas and, and it was a, a, mean night. And the—as I recall the state Highway Patrol was there for a little while and they, they moved out or they did something that didn't help the situation at all and, and of course the orders had come for the National Guard to move in and for the General Abrams to come down from, from Memphis, but that took considerably longer than, than had been hoped for and it was not a good night. And it was the response of the, of the federal authorities to the increased violence was, was not as, as rapid as it might have been.

00:34:10:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU DO YOU REMEMBER THERE, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT AT SOME POINT THE TEAR GAS WAS GONNA RUN OUT, DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

Doar: No, no. I don't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE, ANY, ANY MOMENTS THAT, THAT WHERE YOU THOUGHT THAT THERE, THEY MIGHT BE ROUTED, THAT THE MARSHALS MIGHT BE ROUTED, BEFORE THE, THE TROOPS ACTUALLY ARRIVED?

Doar: No, no I don't, I don't, [coughs] I don't think it got to that point.

00:34:39:00

INTERVIEWER: HOW CLOSELY WERE YOU IN CONTACT WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT IN WASHINGTON WITH BURKE MARSHALL AND OTHERS?

Doar: Well I don't remember really. I may have talked to some of them up there during the night, but there were a lot of people inside the Lyceum talking on the phone and I may have given a report two or three times during the evening. But, but [coughs] I moved back and forth between the Lyceum and f—and the dormitory room where James Meredith was to be sure that there was nothing happening up around that room, anything like what was going on down around the Lyceum, but there wasn't.

INTERVIEWER: WERE YOU GETTING ANY OTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM THEM, ASIDE FROM KEEPING TRACK OF, OF MR. MEREDITH?

Doar: No, I wasn't, I wasn't in charge so that nobody would be giving me instructions. My instructions were to, to see that Meredith was safe and I was satisfied we had that handled.

00:35:40:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OTHER MOMENTS OF THAT NIGHT THAT, THAT STAND OUT AS BEING, YOU KNOW, A MOMENT OF VIOLENCE? A MOMENT OF CALM? ANYBODY IN PARTICULAR ACTING?

Doar: [pause] I really, you know, if you ask me about moments I don't know that I do. I mean, I can, I'd have to think about that.

INTERVIEWER: STOP FOR A MOMENT. LET YOU THINK—

[cut]

00:36:07:00

INTERVIEWER: I MEAN IF, IF YOU HAVE THIS IMAGE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: FLAGS.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —IF YOUR IMAGE IS THAT, I'M NOT GOING TO PURSUE THIS MUCH LONGER I'M JUST TRYING TO GET A SENSE OF IT FOR MY OWN SELF. I MEAN, BUT IF YOUR IMAGE IS OF THIS BLUR, THIS, THIS CHUNK OF TIME, DID YOU EVER FEEL THAT IT WAS GOING TO GET OUT OF CONTROL, PEOPLE WERE GOING TO BE HURT, AS THEY WERE?

Doar: Well, [coughs] I don't think I ever, or, I mean, I don't think I was re—don't recall when I was conscious of the gunfire. I mean, we knew that there was rocks and bottles thrown around and we knew that there was a lot of hollering and shouting and, and gathering

of lots of students, but I don't think at that time that I appreciated the number of potentially violent people that were gathering on that campus from outside the university. I think if I'd realized that, fully at the time, I would have been a lot more apprehensive than I was. If you want to—but, I didn't feel at the time that the marshals were gonna get overrun. I knew it was, it was a serious situation and one that if anybody lost their head you, you could have some serious confrontations but I didn't, it wasn't a, it wasn't a sense of a pitched battle if that's what you're talking about. And the, the marshals weren't using their f—side arms or anything like that.

00:37:43:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF WHO WAS AT FAULT THAT IT GOT OUT OF CONTROL, OR WAS THERE ANYBODY?

Doar: Well, fault or, I mean, you know that's a big question. I mean, would, would the Justice department of the United States government ever did it—done it that way again? Answer no, they wouldn't of. Did the state of Mississippi have any justification for the way it behaved? Absolutely not, absolutely not. There was total lawlessness. The, the people that came up there to get into the, the riot to get into the trouble, did they have any right to come up from halfway across Mississippi or halfway across Alabama to get into that thing? No. But I suppose that with power and authority you, you have to take the responsibility for doing it right. And I'm sure that the—everybody in the Justice Department believes that if you're going to be confronting something like this again you had to do it with a lot more force than two or three hundred marshals. And you couldn't depend on the state police force of Mississippi. You just could not depend upon 'em. That would not work. And so when we went in with Vivian Malone into the University of Alabama we went in it quite a different way. There was lots more military power.

00:39:19:00

INTERVIEWER: WHEN JAMES MEREDITH WAS REGISTERED THAT NEXT MORNING, GETS UP, GOES IN, REGISTERS, FAIRLY QUIETLY, DID YOU FEEL ANY SENSE OF TRIUMPH, ANY VICTORY TO IT?

Doar: Oh, no, the ne—everybody was worn out. There was a lot of physical destruction. The Lyceum building was a—pretty well messed up because of all the people moving in and out of there, you know, there was debris around, and there was, it was, it wasn't, it was a, it was a pretty badly messed-up university building. And, there was no—I had no feeling of elation about, what had been accomplished. It just seemed to me that—we were, it was just another step in a, in a long, long effort to, to break the caste system. I mean, it wasn't there was no feeling of elation, no feeling of satisfaction, no feeling that a heck of a lot had been accomplished. But a feeling that we had done—the government had said what it, that it would do— excuse me, the government did what it said it was gonna do, the gover—the federal government said James Meredith is going to be registered because the Federal Court has ordered him registered. And I can remember being in, in the court in New Orleans when the full panel on the Fifth Circuit was there. And the Justice Department was there, and the

state of Mississippi was there and Governor Barnett's authorities were there. And Chief Judge Tuttle, who was just a marvelous man, and a great American, said to Burke Marshall, now Mr. Marshall, the judicial department, the Judiciary has gone as far as it can go. We can't enforce our own order requiring the state of Mississippi to register James Meredith and I'd like to know from you, Mr. Marshall, what is the Executive branch of the federal government gonna do? And Burke Marshall got up and he said, Judge Tuttle, the Executive branch will meet its responsibility. We fully intend to see James Meredith registered. We think that it would be best—

00:41:39:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Doar: —for the future of the country if the state of Mississippi met its responsibility and took over the responsibility of seeing that James Meredith got registered peacefully and safely. But if there's any problem about that the federal government, the Executive branch, the President of the United States is gonna do it. And he did it.

INTERVIEWER: WHEW! STOP, YES.

00:42:05:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 182]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: FLAGS.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE IN THAT, IN THE, THE FIRST COUPLE OF WEEKS THAT JAMES MEREDITH WAS ON CAMPUS?

Doar: Well, as I said, we tried to see that James Meredith was treated the same way as any other student and had as much freedom as, as—to move around as a student. As we could, as he could. And so we didn't ring him with marshals when he moved from one class room to another and when he ate in the cafeteria, usually or always I would eat with him, but and there might be two or three marshals at neighboring tables, but we would not attempt to get off in some corner or we weren't attempt to get off in some corner, or attempt to eat in, some private room, we ate right in the main cafeteria. And generally, we got a lot of hostile stares and some cat calls, but nobody ever made any attempt to, to threaten Meredith in any way,

shape, or form. I think I remember one night where somebody got some student got exuberant and several students started to gather around the table where we sat. And there—you get the typical build-up of a crowd of kids and, my judgment it was something that, that could possibly have presented some risk to Meredith, so we just moved out of there and finished up and left as quickly as we could. So that, that was the closest, that was considered to be close at all for any time when I was with James Meredith that he [coughs] had any situation where he looked like he'd have—any problem would arise.

00:44:04:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER HIS SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT HIS FEELINGS DURING THIS PERIOD OF TIME?

Doar: No, he didn't [coughs] he didn't share his feelings with me. I mean, how he felt. He was—he kept his own counsel. But he wasn't antagonistic and he wasn't silent. He wasn't moody, but he, he didn't, he didn't belly ache and he didn't complain and he didn't—he was courteous to the marshals and friendly with me.

00:44:40:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF, OF JUDGE WISDOM'S DESCRIPTION, HIS FAMOUS DESCRIPTION OF JAMES MEREDITH AS A, A MAN WITH A MISSION AND A NERVOUS STOMACH?

Doar: Well, he certainly was a man with a mission. [coughs] Whether he had a nervous stomach or not, I don't know. But he had a mission. He was very determined.

00:44:59:00

INTERVIEWER: NOW LET ME JUMP AHEAD TO 1963. I'M COMING UP TO MEDGAR EVER'S DEATH AND MAYBE YOU COULD TALK ABOUT THE SITUATION IN MISSISSIPPI IN JACKSON IN '63 PRIOR TO MEDGAR'S DEATH. WHAT—THIS WAS A TIME, A FAIR AMOUNT OF TENSION.

Doar: Well [coughs] there was, there was—in '61 and '62, that the same time that we had the [coughs] Meredith case going on [coughs] and all through—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY SIR. WHY DON'T YOU START AGAIN? CLEAR YOUR THROAT AND GET STARTED.

Doar: Yeah in '62 while the Meredith case was going on and while Meredith in that first year in the university there was continued efforts by the, by the SNCC kids to register voters and they had moved up into the Delta and they had settled pretty much in the headquarters at Greenwood. And Greenwood was a tough place, a really tough place. And they started to have demonstrations there at the courthouse and in, in Greenwood and people got—kids got arrested, people got arrested. And we brought suits against the county officials and the state

officials and we were in court on these cases of intimidation. And at the same time we were trying to get more registrars to open up the rolls. And it was—we were battling, we weren't making any significant progress but we had a lot of presence in Mississippi. But as far as the kids were concerned we weren't getting anywhere and so that they were searching around for more ways or different ways to bring about to correct this terrible situation. And as I recall it, the demonstrations started to pick up again and, and, and, [coughs] you know, we at the same time were in that period Birmingham was going on and—so that confrontation became more of a tactic than reg—efforts to register that kind of confrontation. I can't, I can't recall right now just specifically what it was like in Jackson just before Medgar Evers' death or where I was at that particular period.

00:47:43:00

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU TALK ABOUT HIS DEATH A LITTLE BIT IN TERMS OF, OF, OF—COULD YOU TALK ABOUT THE FUNERAL AND THAT MASS MARCH AND, AND THE, THE CONFRONTATION THAT CAME THAT DAY?

Doar: Well, [coughs] I went to the funeral. And because I knew Medgar. And he was a friend and then the—his friends, people from all over the country ca—came to the funeral wanted to have a march and they wanted to march up the main street of Jackson. I can't remember the name of the street, but it was— Jackson had one main street principally. And the police officials didn't want them to do that, they said that they could walk across and then walk into a side street where the black restaurants and the black stores were where blacks congregated a side street which was the typical pattern in a Southern town in 1960. There was a street for whites and a street for blacks—and the black street was a side street and a 2nd class street. [coughs] And the police permitted the par—the marchers, the memorial march to, to cross the main street, but then finish up in the side street where the b—the black shops were. And it was a nice day, warm day, summer day and I remember that there were a lot of kids around and, and it was a friendly, but there was a lot of people milling around the streets and then some kids, I don't know who they were, decided that they would march up the main street. And so they started back along toward the main street of Jackson and when they got to the corner of this side street that I've described and the main street, the police put up a road block, put up a line of people and, and, block and said you can't, you can't march on the main street of Jackson, Mississippi. And, so you had a line of police and you had a line of kids or 3 lines of kids and they were 2 or 3 feet apart and the, the kids were singing and agitating and yelling and shouting and complaining and, and then who pushed who first I can't tell you, but the police started to reach out and grab one, five, six of these kids and throw 'em in the paddy wagon. And they got the—that stopped. And then they decided that they would clear the street. This, this is the city police of Jackson. And they started to move along this side street and to disperse the crowd. As they moved further and further into the side street and I was there observing as a representative of the Justice Department and, and as they moved farther down the street kids started to throw bottles and rocks from—nobody was close to getting hurt and the city police were disciplined and controlled and moving slowly up the street in a line across the entire block. And when they got about a block up the street the, the county Sheriff's Office supplemented this line of police with County Deputies and they had guns, shot guns, and my—I didn't think that they had the discipline that the City

police officers did. And so half a block down the street a, a black kid had come out of the crowd and throw a bottle and it had bounced in front of this line of police and the, the glass had skidded into them or a rock had come out or a brick had come out and it had hit, hit the street in front of ‘em and skidded into ‘em and, and I was just afraid that if this kept on that somebody was really gonna get hurt because I didn’t have any confidence in the discipline of those county officers. So I walked through the, the, the line of policemen and walked out and persuaded everybody to stop.

00:52:26:00

INTERVIEWER: IT WAS AS SIMPLE AS THAT. YOU JUST PERSUADED THEM TO STOP?

Doar: Well, when I think, I think it was, it was so startling to everybody that, that—and I knew a lot of the kids and so I saw Dave Dennis there as I was walking in front of the police line and I said, come on Dave, help me. Let’s get this stopped. And I saw somebody else, let’s get it stopped and he—Dave came out and somebody else came out and then it was over.

INTERVIEWER: WERE THEY ANGRY, ON EITHER SIDE, WHAT WOULD YOU SEE ON THE FACES AS YOU’RE LOOKING—

Doar: No, no this was not an angry, angry situation. It hadn’t, in the period of time—

00:53:01:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Doar: —it hadn’t got to the—

INTERVIEWER: I’M SORRY WE JUST HAD A CAMERA ROLLOUT—

00:53:04:00

[cut]

INTERVIEWER: YOU WERE SAYING—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —WHAT KIND OF CROWD IT WAS. WHAT YOU WERE SEEING IN THE CROWD ON EACH SIDE.

Doar: Well I had [coughs] it wasn't a, it wasn't an angry crowd after the funeral. Not at all. And it wasn't a, it wasn't a mob. Not at all. And, it, it was not at a time when the—in my judgment, the kids had gotten so frustrated with their inability to seize the system of the caste system got corrected peacefully that they had just gotten totally disillusionment [sic], disillusioned and were willing to turn to more violent behavior. There wasn't that kind of rhetoric at all at that time. And with respect to the whites this was not—this were law enforcement people.

00:54:01:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT, WHAT EFFECT DO YOU THINK THAT MEDGAR EVERS' DEATH HAD ON THE PROTEST COMMUNITY IN MISSISSIPPI GENERALLY?

Doar: [pause] Well—I sup—I, I would say it made them more resolute, more determined, more angry.

INTERVIEWER: ANY IN TERMS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY?

Doar: Well, I think the—I don't think the white community was capable of, of facing what had happened and admitting their responsibility for it.

00:54:55:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME JUMP AHEAD TO ANOTHER SET OF DEATHS. JUNE 1964, YOU'RE AT THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND YOU GET A CALL THAT THERE ARE THREE CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS THAT ARE MISSING. COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE, THE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THAT AND MAYBE TAKE IT TO WHAT POINT AT WHICH YOU THOUGHT THAT THESE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ACTUALLY DEAD.

Doar: Well, I remember, I was at home when I got the call from someone in Mississippi telling me about the situation and I reported it immediately to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And Bob Owen was in Mississippi and we—I got a hold of him and had him go right up there to Neshoba County. I can't remember when we recognized that—but I guess when the car was found and burned at the edge of Neshoba County it was fairly clear that the kids had been killed.

00:55:57:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REACTED AS FULLY AS IT MIGHT HAVE TO THOSE DEATHS? TO THE, TO THE, TO THAT SITUATION? TO THE INVEST—THE NEED TO INVESTIGATE AND FIND THEM?

Doar: I certainly do. I certainly do. The, the— [coughs] I remember the, the—after the day or second day after the, the, the deaths of—Burke Marshall came into my office, at 6, or 7 o'clock, or 10 o'clock one night and said that the President had decided to have Alan Dulles

go down, the head of the CIA, to make an investigation of the situation in Mississippi and give his recommendations. And Mr. Dulles came to the Justice Department the next morning and the Attorney General had me come up and talk to him because I was more familiar with Mississippi than most anyone probably anybody else in the department. And I went to Mississippi with Alan Dulles and out of that trip the Justice Department made a recommendation that the FBI increase its force in Mississippi substantially. And Mr. Hoover opened an office in Jackson and put some very excellent FBI investigators in charge of that investigation. And they were not only good, but there were a lot of them and they worked all that summer and solved that murder and partici—worked with us to present to a grand jury and to a, a, a jury—regular jury trial of the people that were responsible for those deaths. And so I think that the performance of the Justice Department was, was something that I'm proud of in that, in that respect.

00:58:03:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE IMPACT OF THOSE, THOSE DEATHS IN TERMS OF THE COUNTRY RECOGNIZING THE, THE PROTEST MOVEMENT?

Doar: Oh, I think it had a great impact. I think it had a lot of impact. I don't, I don't really think it had while it was far, far more tragic than what happened at Selma the following year, I think, the thing that really brought disgrace into focus was Selma in 1965. And Neshoba County was, was one terrible episode on that road as Vernon Dahmer's death or Herbert Lee's death or the other deaths in Mississippi or the fire bombings of houses and the other intimidation, the economic intimidation of the sharecroppers in Haywood County or just—I could give you a whole litany of those kinds of circumstances. But I think really that the incident at the Pettus Bridge is the thing that really brought the country into focus.

INTERVIEWER: OK, STOP FOR A MOMENT WHILE I THINK ABOUT THIS.

[cut]

00:59:24:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: FLAGS.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: IN, IN, IN TERMS OF SELMA IN '65, WHEN DID YOU ACTUALLY COME INTO SELMA?

Doar: I first went to Selma in the spring of 1961. And it was the first case that was brought under the voting rights act after President Kennedy was inaugurated. [coughs] And when we got there, another Justice Department lawyer and myself, there was, you know, there had been no outsiders in Selma at all. No law enforcement officials, no demonst—no demonstrations. It was really back in the 17th century. And we brought suit in, in, in Selma

and in Dallas County and then shortly after the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee established a, a headquarters there in Selma and started to work with the kids. So that by this, they were there, probably starting in ‘62, and we had lawsuits in ‘62 and ‘63 and ’64. We were wrestling around with the local authorities all the time trying to get them to register people. Never being very successful, but then, it wasn’t until Dr. King came to Selma in the December of 1965 that he was able to cause the country, the television, the newspapers to focus on the problem.

01:00:58:00

INTERVIEWER: I’M SORRY, IT WAS 1964.

Doar: Excuse me, 1964. OK.

INTERVIEWER: MAYBE, MAYBE YOU COULD PICK UP WITH THAT IDEA. I DON’T, I DON’T WANT TO LEAVE AN ERROR THERE. MAYBE—DID YOU COME TO SELMA AT THAT POINT IN DECEMBER ‘64 OR WAS IT NOT UNTIL ‘65. I THOUGHT YOU WEREN’T THERE UNTIL ’65.

Doar: [coughs] No, no I was, I was in Selma, as I say since ‘61, but Dr. King came in the December of 1964. And there were organized demonstrations, marching up to the—kids marching up to the courthouse trying to register to vote and protesting the fact that people weren’t permitted to register. And James Clark, the local Sheriff, was arresting them and, and it was building up and Dr. King was getting the focus of the country on the problem.

INTERVIEWER: I, I MEANT WITHIN THAT TIME OF THE SELMA CAMPAIGN, WERE YOU IN AND OUT OF THE—

Doar: Yeah, I was in and out of Selma all the time.

INTERVIEWER: UH-HUH.

Doar: All the time.

INTERVIEWER: UH-HUH. DID YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULAR ORDERS IN SELMA AT THAT TIME? WERE YOU PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING A, A CASE OR WERE YOU JUST THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT’S REPRESENTATIVE?

Doar: [coughs] No, no we had cases there. We had voter registration cases, we had intimidation cases, and we had responsibilities to see that if there was any interference with peaceful demonstrations that we would move against the persons that, that committed the interference. We had FBI agents on the scene with cameras. I had my lawyers on the scene observing and if there was any efforts to interfere with peaceful demonstrations we tried to do what we could to stop that.

01:02:37:00

INTERVIEWER: SUCH AS THE PETTUS BRIDGE?

Doar: Well, the Pettus Bridge was then, was then a, a, a march—a decision was gonna be made that blacks were going to march to, to Montgomery and, and the Pettus Bridge was the place where there was the terrible confrontation. And confrontation between police officers, state of—state, state police officers and, and citizens that were demonstrating peacefully.

01:03:10:00

INTERVIEWER: AFTER THIS, THIS SUNDAY DEMONSTRATION THERE WERE CONGRESSMEN ALL OVER THE PLACE DENOUNCING THIS VIOLENCE AND MAKING THIS ENORMOUS STINK. DO YOU KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN TERMS OF, OF, OF THE PRESIDENT'S REACTION, THE OVAL OFFICE, WHAT, WHAT WAS, WHAT WAS THE REACTION THERE?

Doar: Well the, [coughs] the, the incident at the Pettus Bridge was, was filmed by television by cameras and it was on that Sunday night, I didn't see it, but on, it's that Sunday night, it was on all the Sunday Evening News. And the, it just was, the country just was very angry, very mad, very upset and, of course, if the country's upset, not that the President wouldn't be upset anyway, but he—

01:04:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Doar: —something had to be done.

INTERVIEWER: STOP. WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO DO A CHANGE HERE.

01:04:03:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 184]

Doar: Now this was—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: LIGHT.

[sync tone]

Doar: Now, this was a, this was a law enforcement problem not a negotiation problem.

INTERVIEWER: MAYBE, WELL, MAYBE YOU COULD TALK ABOUT THE, THE ROLE OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT IN, I MEAN, JUST IN WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, IF YOU COULD, YOU KNOW, IN TERMS OF THE SELMA CAMPAIGN WHAT, WHAT, ROLE COULD IT HAVE—COULD IT PLAY?

Doar: Well, the Justice Department was a law enforcement agency and the role we played was to, was to try to use the Federal Courts to compel state and local officials to obey the law. Respect the Constitution. And we didn't sit down, I didn't sit down, Burke Marshall did a lot of work with businessmen and other people did a lot of work with businessmen and leaders in the community, church leaders and so forth. Pointing out that it was in their interest not to have violence, not to cause the whole country to focus on Selma, or Birmingham, or someplace like that. But I wasn't engaged in that effort, par—particularly. I was engaged with seeing that the—trying to see that the laws were enforced or building a record of why the existing laws weren't effective. And by, you do that by trying to make the existing laws as effective as you can. And that's what we did. We ran at that as hard as we could. And if, even if we didn't get anywhere, we just went again at it. We went again at it. Because we built a record of, of—which established that the laws in existence weren't capable of dealing with the situation. Now, other people were working on negotiations, trying to bring about change through local leadership, business leadership. It's not in your interest not to do this. And in then, of course, the kids were running at it, and Dr. King's organization was running at it and this wasn't a coordinated effort.

01:06:13:00

INTERVIEWER: WELL, REPEATEDLY IN FACT, DURING THIS PERIOD '62, '63, '64 EVEN '65 PEOPLE ARE CALLING YOU AT THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND SAYING THERE'S GONNA BE VIOLENCE. CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WERE CALLING YOU SAYING THERE'S GONNA BE VIOLENCE. WHY, WHY DOESN'T THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ACT IN THE—

Doar: Well, I know, that, you know, was the big, that was the big [coughs] dispute between the, the, the students and the Justice Department was why the Justice Department wsa why the Justice Department couldn't protect the students. And we would tell them it's just not possible to protect you and we're not in that business. We're not—the FBI is not a police force, there is no National police force, and the Federal Government had decided that, as a matter of, of the long term interest of the country it wasn't the way to solve this problem was not to put the United States Army all the way across every rural county in Mississippi.

01:07:17:00

INTERVIEWER: WERE YOU PART OF—LET ME GO BACK TO, TO THE SELMA MARCH, THE SELMA TO MONTGOMERY MARCH. WERE YOU PART OF ANY OF THOSE DISCUSSIONS WITH—ANY OF THE—PRESENT AT ANY OF THE PLANS

FOR THAT, THAT MARCH OR ANY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH JUDGE JOHNSON ABOUT IT?

Doar: Well, I was, yes, I was present with the, with the negotiations with Judge Johnson. Yeah, I represented the Federal Government before Judge Johnson. Certainly. I was right there.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHAT WAS THE, THE GOVERNMENT, WHAT WAS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION IN TERMS OF, OF TRYING TO GET APPROVAL FOR THIS MARCH?

Doar: The Federal Government's position was that because of the nature of the—because of the circumstances that the people that wanted to march with—to Montgomery had the, had the right to do it. They had a right to go the State Capitol to present their grievances. And we urged Judge Johnson to permit that.

01:08:16:00

INTERVIEWER: WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE MARCH ACTUALLY BEGAN? WERE YOU, WERE YOU THERE AT THE HEAD OF THE MARCH?

Doar: Well, I wasn't at the head of the march. But I was with the march all thr—all through Selma to Montgomery. I was, you know, every day, every night.

INTERVIEWER: AND?

Doar: Well, it was a, it was a, it was a great march. It was terrific. It was a great—it's a very, very moving experience. Nothing like it. And when the, you know, when you came into Montgomery and saw the crowd in Montgomery and saw that march up to the state capitol, you know, it's, it was a great parade. You only see one or two great parades in, your life and that was the one. And it really, really was—people felt that they were finally getting somewhere.

01:09:10:00

INTERVIEWER: IS THAT WHAT IT WAS THAT WAS SO SPECIAL ABOUT IT? WHAT WAS, WHAT WAS IT? WAS IT, WAS IT THE LENGTH? WAS IT THE JOINING OF FORCES? WHAT WAS IT THAT WAS SPECIAL?

Doar: [coughs] Well, I think it was, I think it was the fact that all the efforts that everybody had done working individually and, and all of us that in one way or another had worked to try to eliminate the caste system. We finally thought or felt that we had brought—the American people brought the problem or the disgrace to the attention of the American people. And that as a result, the elected representatives of the American people were gonna do something about it. And they were gonna do something that was gonna work. And they did do something that was gonna work. And we sensed that. And of course, it, it was, it was a joyful

day. And then to have it end with Mrs. Liuzzo being killed was a terrible night. But the parade was still a great parade.

01:10:22:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU INVESTIGATED THE LIUZZO—

Doar: I did.

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU TALK ABOUT THAT A LITTLE BIT?

Doar: Well, when I investi—when you say I investigated, I didn't the—I was advised of it when I was in Montgomery and [coughs] the bureau had solved—the President announced that the case had been solved early the next morning. And from then on, I had the responsibility of seeing that the matter was presented to a grand jury and ultimately trying the case.

INTERVIEWER: DID, DID YOU, DID YOU FEEL IN ANY WAY THAT IT HAD, THAT IT JUST NEGATED THE, THE SUCCESS OF THE MARCH?

Doar: No I didn't feel it negated. It certainly cast a terrible, sad cloud over the march.

INTERVIEWER: I—STOP FOR A MOMENT. I, I THINK—

01:11:12:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: THAT PEOPLE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: FLAGS.

INTERVIEWER: —NOW ONLY LOOK AT—

01:11:15:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —THAT POST '65 PERIOD AND THEY ONLY SEE THE WATTS RIOTS OR THEY ONLY SEE WHATEVER AND THEY DON'T SEE THE REAL ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT THIS, THIS PERIOD OF—IN THE LATE '50s AND '60s WROUGHT.

Doar: Sure I can.

INTERVIEWER: GO ON.

Doar: Well, you asked me about the accomplishments of the ‘60s. You asked me about the accomplishments of the ‘60s, the early ‘60s and ‘65, in light of the problems that existed in ‘65 through, thereafter with violence in the North and demonstrations all over the country. And, and the kids becoming more and more bitter and disillusioned and the country got into a, a—there were some things that were, were negative but I always felt that, that through it all there was a really a strong forward, positive constructive accomplishment by the American people during that period. If you consider that during the period from 1954 to 1965 this country broke the caste system. Now, there’s no other civilization that’s ever been able to do that, peacefully, without a revolution. And this the American people accomplished through the democratic constitutional processes of law. And that was—and if you take a look at the long term that was really a tremendous accomplishment. Now, it was clouded and shrouded and, and, and obscured by the Vietnam War and the fact that because the law was imperfect and very imperfect because of our Federal system, the kids, the black kids of this country the leaders, the people that we really had so much to, to give to the country just were casualties. And as they became casualties the bitterness of, of, of, of all the casualties, just kind of overwhelmed an awful lot of people. And so, you had a kind of a, of a, of a temporary negative reaction. But it wasn’t the principle direction that the country was going.

INTERVIEWER: THANK—

[sound roll out]

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:01:14:02:00