

David B. Ray Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 3/5/1968
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Creator: David B. Ray Jr.

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Biographical Note

David B. Ray Jr. was a member of the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Mental Retardation. This interview focuses on the efforts of the President's Panel on Mental Retardation to have legislation passed and their work with Congressmen and state governors to have it passed, among other topics.

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By David B. Ray, Jr.

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David B. Ray Jr.– JFK #1
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Oral History Interview

with

DAVID B. RAY, JR.

March 5, 1968
Washington, D.C.

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't we just begin by my asking you what, if you recall, your reactions were at the start of the Kennedy Administration to the establishment of the President's Panel on Mental Retardation? Or even going back further than that, did you have any expectations when the Kennedy Administration started that there would be a change of emphasis by the federal government?

RAY: Yes, I think that, having worked on the local level in the state of Iowa and the state of Arizona and the state of Arkansas, one of the things, particularly in mental retardation, I felt in working with people was that it had a stigma to it when you said mental retardation. It was hard to move people, and you had a small network made up of parents and others, but we were not getting to what I call the power leaders of the country or of the state or even of the cities that we were working in. And some pretty good work was being done for the retarded, but we were not in the mainstream.

So I can remember, particularly in the late fifties when it was speculated that Senator John Kennedy might run for the presidency, I think there was a lot of speculation among those of us in the field if he won, what would this mean to mental retardation. I can remember going to meetings, sitting around having a bull session about what would this really mean to the field. I can remember one particular incidence down in Mississippi, some people there that certainly would be classified in their thinking as being opposed to Kennedy running because of their religious feeling, as well as their racial. Yet these people were very close to the field of mental retardation, and even there in this particular session, they were speculating what it might mean to the field of MR. So I can remember this from the late fifties. I don't think there's any question of it.

STEWART: Was this because of his known personal interest in it or because he would be a Democratic President who would be apt to spend more money than . . .

RAY: No, it was because he had a sister that was mentally retarded. It boiled down to that. Just strictly that "Look, here's somebody that might win a high office that must have a personal interest in mental retardation." Not that Kennedy at that point that I know of had really said much about mental retardation, but it was known in the circle that he had a retarded sister.

STEWART: From your point of view, let me ask you first. You were director of the Conway Children's . . .

RAY: Yes, it was the Arkansas Children's Colony, which was a state institution.

STEWART: This was a state institution?

RAY: Right, I was superintendent of that.

STEWART: What, if any, major criticisms were you making of the approach that was being taken in the late 1950's by the federal government? Were there any areas that you thought were being given too much emphasis to the detriment of others? Or was it always just a matter of they weren't doing enough?

RAY: Well, in the fifties, it was a fact that the U.S. Government was doing very little in the field of mental retardation. There was no legislation outside of a small amount of money in the Children's Bureau that was really what you might say pinpointed for mental retardation. And about the only money that came to help the retarded was just in some general category of which mental retardation, because of the negative feeling that it had, was not even getting half of its fair share. So as far as I'm concerned, the federal government was doing nothing to amount to anything. And this came out in congressional hearings in '56 and '57. The late John Fogarty brought this out in '56. So we were not looking to the federal government for any help at all because it wasn't giving it, as far as I was concerned. It was really that simple.

STEWART: Do you recall what your reactions were to the establishment of the President's Panel in late 1961?

RAY: Oh, God, I remember. Yes, that was something. You know, when this came out, it was like--I don't know--it was like you had won a lottery or like your favorite football team had won and you were standing up roaring. I think that to the people in the field--it's hard for me to express--it meant that type of thing. You saw something on the national level that said, "Boy, this can really mean something to get mental retardation out of the closet. It can mean something to get people on the national level, as well as the governors and state legislature, interested in the field." And to make this even better was to see--you expected to get something from your professional journals about this, but when you read it in local newspapers, even though it might be a small article,

that President Kennedy had done this, it really did something to you when you saw it in the newspapers, as far as having the Panel.

STEWART: Did this have any impact at all as far as your local situation was concerned? Was there any increase in your budget, for example, in the first two years?

RAY: Well, I don't think that it was right away, but I think this came about. I saw this even as early as '63, based on things that came out from the President's Panel. In other words, when they first started, I think it meant more to the people working in the field and more to the parents. Then as they began to have regional hearings and as they began to make some of their material available and then particularly when they came out with their report to the President, well, this, in a state like Arkansas which is pretty much self-centered. . . . You know, they like for their--and this is true of many states--they like for you to be from Arkansas. It's not that they don't take advantage of what's in other states, but they didn't look as much to the outside. And even there, I think, they were impressed when you were able to quote some statistics based on national studies that the Panel had undertaken. And I really feel that this helped us in 1963 in Arkansas to get a much better appropriation. In other words, it was a break with the past, as far as I was concerned, as well as some new construction money. And then another thing it helped on was this, the state was willing to do some speculation to make some money available that hopefully would be matched with federal money because it was. . . . I think we all had a lot of hopes in early '63 after the President's message to Congress that there was going to be some legislation for mental retardation. And this awoke state legislatures because they said, "Gee, we can make the state dollar go two times or three times as far." So they were willing to speculate a little.

STEWART: What was the general reaction of Governor [Orval E.] Faubus and other political leaders? There was a certain amount of criticism by some Southern governors that this was another big federal effort to control some local programs.

RAY: You know, even though Governor Faubus I think said this about some federal programs, I don't remember that the Governor ever said this about the mental retardation program. It might be that he did. As far as I know, the field of mental retardation--I guess because so darned little had been done, particularly in Arkansas. . . . We had never had an institution until this one was built, and it didn't open up until '59. And most states had had institutions for many, many years. And I think because there was a lot of interest in mental retardation, a lot of people that really did not support President Kennedy on many things and probably did not vote for him, I mean I think they were very appreciative of his interest in mental retardation, and I believe Faubus was, too.

STEWART: Wasn't there a certain amount of criticism later on of the setup in many states, the relationship in many states between the mental health people and the mental retardation people?

RAY: Yes, this was . . .

STEWART: And if so, was this a problem in Arkansas?

RAY: Yes, it was. We had a lot of problems along that line. I think in many states, and I certainly can speak for Arkansas, for years what was done for the retarded, particularly from an institution, was done in the mental hospitals under psychiatric standpoint. And I think that the President's Panel report made it pretty clear that the needs of the mentally retarded were unique and that they needed to be filled by specialists from many areas and not just a psychiatric standpoint. And I think it gave us something to stand on, and we had some pretty good scuffles

in Arkansas between mental health and mental retardation. Unfortunately, I'm sure we wasted a lot of energy that should have been spent on the people we were trying to serve. But I feel that it did work out to the advantage. But it certainly--there were some real scuffles going on. But I think that the President's Panel, though, it helped divide. . . . In the first place, it did this: The services that were finally defined in the federal government, they were set up not part of the mental health institutes, but they were set up in the different factions of government that they belonged in. And I think this, in turn, gave incentives to the states to be sure that they had good, sound mental retardation programs. Even though they might administratively be under a mental health setup, at least somebody was heading that up that was a mental retardation expert. And I think that's the big thing.

STEWART: Do you recall what your reactions were to the report of the President's Panel? Were there any areas of it that you were critical of, for example?

RAY: Well, I don't think that you can. . . . You know, in any report like this, I'm sure that all of us in the field would have some pet desires that we would like to have seen carried further. I had hoped that there would be more on what I call "models of excellence in residential care." I'd been concerned--and I still am, by the way--that in this country we are still building institutions like we did many, many years ago. And I had hoped that the President's Panel might be more specific as to one small item--the size of an institution. My understanding now is the Panel did have many discussions and arguments and disagreements over what the size of an institution ought to be, and I wish they had been more specific in some of those areas. But from the standpoint of the overall report, it was an excellent report and one that I still say today in speeches and every other way has become the Bible to the movement of mental retardation. No question about it.

STEWART: Because there had been . . .

RAY: Well, there had been nothing. But even more than that, going back before the report was issued, I can remember the regional forum in Atlanta, Georgia. I think that what really did a lot of good was these guys that had been working in the field of MR, whether they were the head of an institution like myself or day care center or whether they were a parent of a retarded child: when they came into this panel and Chairman Leonard Mayo was there and George Tarjan and some of the other people. . . . And then the one that really made the big difference was Mrs. Shriver, Eunice Kennedy Shriver. I mean, with her there, you sort of felt--I don't know--that she was sort of representing the President there at this regional meeting, and it sort of gave you a real uplifting. You would listen to the other people testifying on what their needs were, and I think you went back somewhat renewed and determined that you were going to get some things for the retarded that you'd never gotten before. So I think even before the report came out, particularly those of us that went to regional meetings got a tremendous lift.

And a lot of this had good publicity. I know in Arkansas when I went to Georgia, they played up the fact that I was going down to testify before President Kennedy's Panel. Well, this, it wasn't publicity for me, but it was publicity in the field of mental retardation. And the papers played this up, and when I got back, they wanted interviews on what took place there and what recommendations, and this gave us something to build on in Arkansas. So a lot of things happened before the report came out.

STEWART: Okay, then you, as you said before, met Mrs. Shriver at one of these regional meetings?

RAY: Yes, the one in Atlanta, right.

STEWART: You came to Washington in the summer of . . .

RAY: Yes, in June of '63, right.

STEWART: What was the discussion as to what you were going to do when you got here?

RAY: Well, the thing was this: President Kennedy had made his address to Congress on mental retardation and mental illness. And then some legislation had been drawn up, and the charge that Mr. and Mrs. [R. Sargent] Shriver asked me to do, along with [Myer] Mike Feldman, was to work in Dr. [Stafford L.] Warren's office as sort of a liaison with the states and with Congress on the progression of this legislation. So this was my job. It was one that was a tremendous challenge. I certainly felt lost here for a long period of time, but it was, you know, something that had to be done.

STEWART: Why don't we start out with the Congress first, and then we can talk about the states? Or can you neatly separate them? I assume . . .

RAY: I think so, yes. We can work on it.

STEWART: What did you consider to be the major problems as far as Congress was concerned? what specific people?

RAY: Well, the major problem that I saw was twofold. Number one was really explaining why something special was needed for mental retardation and what mental retardation was and why such a big deal was being made out of this. In other words, you really had to do a job of education with the Congressmen on what mental retardation was. The second was a negative type of thing that I didn't realize until I got to working with Congress. And I guess at that time, like you find in 1963 in any Congress, there was some reaction against President Kennedy from a congressional standpoint. And I found that in some of these Congressmen that I knew pretty well, because I'd gotten to know some of them while I was still in Arkansas even though they were from other states, that I could go there on my own, but it was better not to play up the White House at that point. And this was particularly true with some of them. It almost was a

negative reaction because it tended to be a rather tough Congress at that time. At least, I found it so. So I found those two things.

STEWART: Do you think that some people took the position, initially at least, that without understanding fully the whole field of mental retardation, they probably thought that this was something that President Kennedy and the Kennedy family was pushing; therefore, conceivably, there's something fishy here or something a little bit wrong; that it maybe isn't worth all the attention it's been getting, but it's getting it because it's a personal thing with the President?

RAY: I think some of the Congressmen felt that, yes. I would say they would be in the minority, but yes. I think some of them did. I do, I think you're right. This came out with several.

STEWART: Can you remember any specific people who you felt to be real problems in terms of getting the legislation through?

RAY: You mean Congressmen and so forth?

STEWART: Yes.

RAY: Well, there were certainly Congressmen and Senators both that, because of their conservative beliefs about federal programs were not supporters of the proposed legislation. Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater, Senator [Carl T.] Curtis, the Congressman, [Senator Edward V.] Long, from Missouri. I don't know, there were several like that. I'd have to really dig back.

STEWART: Well, what was your general approach? Were you, when first started on this thing, canvassing everyone, trying to hit as many people as you could? Just what was your general approach to the passage of this?

RAY: I was probably fortunate, and it was probably one of the reasons that the Shrivvers asked me to come to Washington, the committees that these bills were in were headed at that time by Congressmen that happened to be good friends of mine, and also a couple of them being from Arkansas. One of them, Wilbur Mills, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee was handling part of the MR legislation, and the public law that was finally passed, 88-164, which was construction and so forth, was being handled by the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee by Oren Harris who recently was appointed to a federal judgeship. And then in the Senate, Senator Lister Hill, whom I'd had the pleasure of working with on some other assignments, was handling some of the legislation. So these were the key people that I worked with.

Then by working with those key people and working with the staffs of those key Congressmen and Senators, we were able to find out where some of the problems were in both the House and the Senate. And then we tried to find out how do we solve those problems? how do we win those people over? I don't think they would be won over by David Ray walking into their office cold. And this is where we get to the other part of the coin, and that is to work with the people in the states and the congressional districts that these individuals were from and to get the mental retardation forces in that locality to zero in on that particular Congressman or Senator and try to educate him as to what this would mean to their respective states. And I think this was where we made the greatest progress.

STEWART: Did the fact that the mental retardation and the mental health measures were combined in the message, and I assume were being handled at least with some cooperation, did this present any problems? Did the two tend to get mixed up in people's minds?

RAY: Yes, they did, and I think that's why they were finally put together because they were separate bills, and the bills were finally joined into

one bill, which was 88-164. It certainly got confused. I know that Mrs. Shriver and some of the others preferred to see those bills stay separate. But I think that the people in Congress--and as I look back on it, I think they were right in Congress in what they did. I think we ended up with a stronger bill and one that we got much greater support for by combining the bills. This had nothing to do with how the law was going to be administered. It did not change that at all, but it put it all under one bill. But this was a problem. Yes, it was.

STEWART: Who on the White House staff in [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien's office were you working most closely with and who in general was in charge of the legislative strategy for these measures?

RAY: Well, of course, you had your legislative group under Larry O'Brien, but my contact at the White House and the person I worked with direct was Mike Feldman. Even though Mike was, from the standpoint of lines of duty in the organization, really not working the Hill, he was still the person that I sort of worked with direct, as well as with Sarge Shriver. Even though Sarge was involved--he was not involved, to the extent Larry O'Brien was--we would have many meetings together, particularly at nighttime, as far as what the status was and what some of the problems were, sort of a progress report.

STEWART: But there was no one from Larry O'Brien's office or Larry O'Brien himself that got heavily involved with this thing?

RAY: Yes, they were heavily involved, but through Mike, we would keep them posted, but we had somewhat of a The way I interpreted it was this--or the way I did it was this, regardless, that I was sort of free-lancing, and that's about the only way that I could accept this assignment, to free-lance and not have to go through one individual in order that I could go and see some congressman or to make a move. And I was really doing a free-lance job. I

like a state that we felt was weak, then we'd start making contacts right in that state with groups, local groups and state groups.

STEWART: Looking back on it now and the relative ease with which these measures passed, do you think you were overly pessimistic at the start that this would require a larger effort than it actually did?

RAY: I think we might have been a little pessimistic because some of the other Kennedy legislation was having a difficult time. But I like to believe this, too, that we had so many people working that we had a ground swell that started that was most impressive to Congress because I know we did. I just know it because I saw areas that changed and I saw Congressmen that changed. I saw a man that I've got greatest respect for--like Paul Rogers from Florida or on the other side of the aisle, Congressman Ancher Nelsen from Minnesota, a Republican--who approached this not being against it, but certainly they had to be sold. And once they were sold, they became some of our strongest supporters for this. And a lot of this came from people in their own state indicating the needs of the retarded. And I really think that the ground swell was tremendous.

STEWART: As far as keeping track of those in favor and those opposed, were there significant changes, say from June or July to October or November?

RAY: I don't think there's any question about it. I know particularly in the 88-164, the construction bill, in the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, this bill had trouble in the subcommittee and it had some serious trouble in the full committee. Under the leadership of Oren Harris, a vote was not called on this until there could be adequate support to pass the kind of bill that was needed. We saw the change that took place. I think the little progress meetings that we would have with Sarge and some of the others would indicate this. I can remember in July we went around for several weeks pretty pessimistic about all of this. I don't think we were misreading it at that time. I think that that's the way it was then.

STEWART: Yes. Do you recall any situations or activities that you were in conflict with Larry O'Brien's office on; for example, working with certain Congressmen in a way that was contrary to how they were working with them on a lot of other things?

RAY: Well, I remember one time we had a Republican Congresswoman from the state of Washington that I had found out that she had had a real interest in mental retardation, and we thought she could be of some help to us on some other Republicans. And I asked Dr. Warren if he would invite her over to eat in the downstairs White House mess which he was eligible to eat at. We took her down there, and I went with Dr. Warren. And then about a day or two later Larry O'Brien wrote a scorching letter to Stafford Warren saying, "Don't you dare bring somebody like that into our midst. She might overhear something." It made me mad as all get out because this gal personally--and she did it for us later; we didn't tell her this happened--she personally changed the vote of five or six Republicans on this bill. Yes, I remember that, and I strongly disagreed with it, and I do today, with this type of strategy.

STEWART: Were there any other similar incidents?

RAY: Well, yes, a while ago you asked about checking through Larry O'Brien. He had many memos on file--I mean, Dr. Warren got many memos, I guess they were routine, on how we were supposed to check there before we made contacts on the Hill and before we did that. And I just disregarded them, and I did the free lance. I came in under that setup, and as far as I know, it was no disagreement. No one told me to quit doing it personally. If it had come to the point of doing it the way I thought was not best, I just wouldn't be here to do it. It was that simple. I just disregarded the memos, and I worked the way I thought was right, and that is that. I didn't have the time to go checking with somebody about seeing this Congressman or that Senator. I just did it.

STEWART: There were no further repercussions?

RAY: Well, just that one comes to my mind. There might have been others. I just don't recall right now. I just don't recall. Of course, mental retardation--they had so many problems at that time that I'm sure that Larry O'Brien was not too conscious of some of the things we were doing. Let's just say that we did a lot of things in the way we thought the best without making a big production out of it.

STEWART: Did you in this whole period, one, meet with the President at all or, two, get any real indication of what his specific interest was or what aspects of it he was concerned with?

RAY: There was one meeting, besides the bill signing, which I was at that Dr. Warren and Mrs. Shriver-- I don't believe that Sarge was there--and I think Mike Feldman and two or three of us from the office was there, and for one thing they had a picture made of Dr. Warren and the President. And then we took about ten minutes, and Mrs. Shriver, with the help of Dr. Warren, and I participated briefly, gave a brief briefing, you might say, of where we stood on the mental retardation legislation. If my memory serves me correct, this was in July when we felt, I think we all felt it was going to pass, but at that time I think we were a little pessimistic. And I recall only this, that the President--I know he had a lot of things on his mind-- didn't give any solutions, I don't say that, but the President by his reaction and by the so-called pat on the back of "Let's go a little further, and let's get this through," I had the impression that he felt very deeply about it. And it certainly gave me the feeling of wanting to do a little more. And this was my only contact with him personally, other than the bill signing.

STEWART: The President, of course, held weekly meetings with the congressional leadership. Was this mental retardation legislation ever a specific item discussed at these breakfasts that you know of?

RAY: I know that it was, but I can't give you any specific things because of this reason: The information that Mike Feldman felt would be of help to me, he would let us know about it. And as I said, I saw Mike Feldman pretty often, and he was my contact there. And at the same token, things that I felt would be of help to them--because I know that we were able to find some things out that the White House did not have just because of some different approaches that we took that tended to be not on the political lines but the nonpolitical ones. This is another reason that I think we were successful. We had the pros in politics working on this, but we also had the other route of the nonpolitical approach which tended to, I think, have a lot of weight with the Congressmen. When we found things out, we would alert Mike Feldman, who in turn would pass them on to the appropriate people at this conference. That I do know. I can't give you specifics on it, but I just know it generally.

STEWART: Yes. Were there any or many Senators or Congressmen who had personal familiarity with the problem of mental retardation that you found especially valuable?

RAY: Of course, almost everyone would name, certainly, John Fogarty, not that he had it in his family, but his best friend. Certainly he was very helpful. And Senator [Lister] Hill because he had long been for this cause. There were some other Congressmen that I think certainly was helpful to the cause. At that time, we had [Edward M.] Ted Kennedy in the Senate. Of course, he was fairly new, but he gave us some entrees that was very helpful. And of course, I've named the ones from the committees that we worked with. There were some others that had children. that. . . . I'm just trying to recall names now of people.

STEWART: Well, I didn't mean to ask you for specific names, but were there some people who were approachable from this angle? Were there many people?

RAY: Well, I don't think there was--you mean from either personal involvement from . . .

STEWART: From personal involvement.

RAY: I don't think there were many that way. I think that, again, with most of the Congressmen--and this would be true, too, of even men like Wilbur Mills and Oren Harkis, both of these men were tough as far as wanting to know the facts. Now the Arkansas Children's Colony was located in the congressional district of Wilbur Mills, but to give you an idea, he still wanted hard-nosed data on the problems of mental retardation and how this legislation was going to benefit it. Once he was convinced of that, then he went all out. So even having the Colony in his own district, this made that kind of a difference. And I think it did with most of them. I don't think there is any question about it.

STEWART: Were the conflicts--I understand there were certain problems between the mental health people and the mental retardation people within HEW. Were these at all reflected in the handling of the legislation? Did these create any problems at all?

RAY: In HEW, it's possible it did. [Robert H.] Bob Felix at NIMH at that time was head of the National Institution of Mental Health. I think there's no question, that he made great contributions, but, being also an aggressive administrator, I think he would have liked to have seen more of the MR come under the National Institute of Mental Health.

But people actually doing the lobbying, guys like [Thomas F.] Mike Gorman, in particular, for mental health. . . . Mike Gorman was also on Staff Warren's advisory committee, and Mike and I kept each other posted very nicely, and I don't think there was any competition there. I feel this--I never

found it any differently--I think it was the mental health people that certainly felt it would be better to tie the two bills together. And we somewhat objected to this. But as I look back, I think it was the right strategy. We didn't have any blows over it, and I don't think there was any undercutting on the Hill. I don't know of any occasion that Mike Gorman or somebody else would say, "Let's take ten million from MR and give ten million more to mental health, or let's do this to MR." I don't know of any case like that. And one of the things I think was our strong point, I think that one of the reasons of our success--I'm convinced of this--that most of us in the field of MR, (and I'm not talking about the White House staff now, I'm talking about the people that were working from Dr. Warren's office and on the state level) we were all saying about the same thing to the Congressmen. And I think we weren't disagreeing too much; we all had about the same story to tell. And this is because we coordinated it from Dr. Warren's office.

STEWART: Okay, as far as working then with the states and the governors, what was your basic approach here? Were there key states or key governors that you were interested in getting over? Or was this totally tied to the Congressmen you were trying to get to?

RAY: Well, this brings us back to when you and I talked earlier here about Faubus. Well, we were having a little trouble with Senator [John L.] McClellan and a little bit of trouble with Congressman [Ezekiel C.] Gathings from Arkansas--they're both fine gentlemen, but quite conservative. And Faubus, on one of his visits to Washington, after I alerted him to what the problem was, on his personal visits to the people on the Hill brought out to both of these Congressmen his desire to see this mental retardation legislation passed.

Well, this is the type of thing we tried to do with some of the states. A good example is the state of Kentucky. At the time the Governor was Bert Combs who was the parent of a retarded child. And Bert Combs not only helped us with some of his own delegation, but with some of the other delegations that he had. And a good example there is Senator Morton, Thruston Morton, of Kentucky, certainly elite in the Republican Party. I wouldn't say this was one of his top priorities, but we happened to know that he supported this and also encouraged some of his colleagues to support this bill. So this is how we used governors to get to some of the key people and also to point out what it would mean to their state. If this legislation passes, what does this mean to Kentucky or to California. So this is the type of thing we tried to do.

STEWART: Yes. Let's see, to what extent were you spelling out to these governors exactly what they could expect in terms of funds if this legislation passed? Were you giving them a total run-down on just what might be available to them?

RAY: Yes. When the bills were proposed, we didn't know what the final appropriation would be, but they did have the authority or the general appropriation that they were asking for. And so we were able in Dr. Warren's office, with the help of appropriate HEW people, to come up with charts. And in these charts we would show what this would mean to each state. We had it spaced out over a five year period because some of the legislation appropriated more money the next year, and the next year, and the next year after, and we took each state and spaced it out. And we mailed this information around the country and said, "This is what this will mean to your state." We did the same thing with the university affiliated facilities and the research centers-- not that every state would get one of those, but the fact that it was there and it was a plum that certainly could be had by the state if it could qualify for it.

STEWART: This was the ten . . .

RAY: Yes, the research. That was also in 88-164 and then the university affiliated, of which some nineteen, I think, have been built.

STEWART: Have these been definitely allocated or committed before the legislation went through?

RAY: Oh no, no. Not where they were going. You actually had the three parts to that bill: one of them was money for the construction of research centers; then another category, construction of university affiliated, and they would be from applicants all over the country and would be chosen by a council; the third category was construction of mental retardation facilities, of which each state got a certain amount of money and it was allocated on the Hill-Burton formula. And this was what we were able to make up in a chart. We could only say: There's ten million or something for university affiliated; this is what it's all about; this is something your state might possibly benefit from.

STEWART: Were there any major aspects of any of the three bills that were dropped or severely altered in the course of the legislation?

RAY: Gosh, I'd have to go back and check, but it seems to me that some money was cut out, and there was some comprising, but we were not seriously hurt by it. At one time, in the mental health, there was staffing which was dropped. There was a controversy that mental retardation should have asked for staffing too, and if mental retardation would have asked for staffing, maybe the staffing would have passed in '63. It just so happens that mental health came back in, I believe in '65, and got their staffing and mental retardation did not get their staffing until 1967.

STEWART: That wasn't in the bill at all, originally, the staffing part of it?

RAY: Staffing for community mental health was in the original bill.

STEWART: And then it was . . .

RAY: Then it was dropped. It probably was dropped in Committee, as I remember. But it was never reported out. In the bill that finally came up to Congress, you're right, it was not in it. But in the very beginnings of the first bill that was introduced, there was staffing--just for community mental health, not for mental retardation.

STEWART: Right, okay. You attended, I believe, the Southern Governors' Conference in August.

RAY: Right, right.

STEWART: What do you recall about this, or is there anything exceptional as far as the reaction of the Southern governors to this program that you recall?

RAY: Well, Faubus was chairman of it, for one thing. And second, when he introduced Dr. Warren, even though at that time Faubus had the name of fighting the federal government and so forth, he gave quite a glowing introduction of Dr. Warren and also plugged that Arkansas was doing a great job for the retarded through the new Arkansas Children's Colony and certainly gave a plug to the national Administration on what they were trying to do. And Dr. Warren, and I helped out some, sort of gave a description of what the pending legislation was and what it would mean to each of the Southern states that were represented there. I felt we were received quite cordially. We had separate conferences with some of the governors. Governor [George C.] Wallace was there from Alabama. I don't remember too much about Wallace or any reaction that he had personally.

But overall, we had a very good reception. But I'll always remember that about Governor Faubus.

STEWART: That was a real crucial period civil rights-wise. The legislation had just gave up, and . . .

RAY: Right. And that was a big part of their conference. I was the one that made the contact with Governor Faubus, and he was delighted to have Dr. Warren and myself come to this conference and made a key place on the program itself. So I thought that was very good. And all of the governors were there, every one of them.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

STEWART: Were there any civil rights implications at all to these three pieces of legislation? Or did this question come up in any of the discussions you had?

RAY: I don't remember it coming up on the Hill. I remember it coming up with some people that you would check with out in the states. But again, these were not the governors, these were parents, or these were people that were in some of the Southern states that ran programs that felt that if the federal government was going to make funds available, how much were they going to get involved in the running of those programs. And part of this would be integration. I don't remember it being a major issue, but it did come up. But it was very minor, very minor.

STEWART: Well, that's the point, whether it was a factor at all.

RAY: It certainly was not a major factor at all, as far as I'm concerned.

STEWART: Is there anything else as far as working with the governors that you think is especially important? Did this whole matter of who in state governments you were most concerned with getting on your side, was this a factor at all? Again getting back to the business of the difference between the mental health and mental retardation people.

RAY: Well, at least from my standpoint, generally in a contact with a governor or somebody in the state structure, it was to ask them to do a specific thing in relationship to this pending bill in Congress. Therefore, we were not involved in the overall carrying out of it. I think that where the problem came in was after the bill was passed, as most of these federal bills do, unfortunately, they say "a single state agency," and then the power play started in each state on who was going to be the single state agency. But while we had this rahrah going in '63 of trying to get the bill through, that's what we had everybody focused on. And we said, "Don't worry about the guidelines. Don't worry about these other things." We were asking these governors and key people to carry out one assignment, and we didn't try to get involved in some of this other stuff at that point. You see what I mean. I tried to play it down.

STEWART: Okay. I came across the comment of one governor, namely Governor [Albertis S., Jr.] Harrison of Virginia.

RAY: Yes.

STEWART: Do you recall any specific dealings with him?

RAY: I remember talking to him at the Southern Governors' Conference, but I don't. . . . What was the comment?

STEWART: He had made a very adverse statement about the President's message, saying that this was an exaggeration of the problem and unneeded federal interference with a state responsibility and so forth.

RAY: I don't remember that, but it indicates how wrong the governor was. I happen to live in Virginia now, and they have been one of the most backward states in comprehensive programs for the mentally retarded. And they are paying for it now. This legislature now, the state legislature, they're trying to build some new facilities and get some county units going. So they've got some real problems in the state, so he's finding out that it wasn't. . . . I don't remember the statement though.

STEWART: Do you remember any particular problems as far as your relationships with the press? Who was handling most of the press relationships within Dr. Warren's office, or was there anyone that did this more than anyone else?

RAY: Yes, let's see. We had a gal named Lois Jones that was detailed, I believe, from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development that spent time. Then we had a man from the National Association of Retarded Children named Tom Murphy, and Tom was spending time on this press standpoint. A fellow by the name of [Crozier] Cro Dupontier from New Orleans didn't come along until about February or March of '64. It was after the assassination. And he started handling the publicity after that on a full-time basis. We didn't do much. I'll tell you what in '63, as far as publicity, Dr. Warren was making some speeches; we didn't do a lot of publicity, at least from my standpoint. I was busy working the Hill and then busy on the telephone. I'd start out in the morning with breakfast meetings on the Hill and work there a good part of the day and then go back to Dr. Warren's office and start making my telephone calls, both to the states, and this type of thing, and then at nighttime, appropriate nights, meeting with Sarge and Mike Feldman going over reports, and just start off the next day in the same way. This was my routine. We weren't doing a lot of press stuff in 1963.

STEWART: Yes. What specific kinds of things were you asking Mrs. Shriver to do as far as the legislation was concerned? What role really did she play in the passage of the . . . Where was she most helpful?

RAY: Mrs. Shriver was the liaison with the President on a personal basis, and that was usually on weekends. They'd go to Hyannis Port. And almost every Friday night. . . . I can remember several occasions. One time, I got out of the office, and my family was up here, and I was trying to be with them a little bit, and we went to a movie. And I always had to leave word with the White House of where I was going. And I was called out of the movie, and Mrs. Shriver said, "I'm getting ready to go to Hyannis Port. I'm going to see the President tomorrow. Now give me an up-to-date report on the legislation." And from that point on I always carried a report with me, because I didn't have it along with me then, exactly where the problems were. And her greatest, which was a tremendous contribution, was when the President was somewhat relaxing at Hyannis Port on a weekend to be able to talk to him about mental retardation, about the legislation.

STEWART: But in terms of her relationship with any people on the Hill, was this important?

RAY: No, Mrs. Shriver didn't do a lot on the Hill. She did a few telephone calls, but the key person on that was Sarge. What would happen, I'd go to Sarge and say, "Look, here's the problem with this Congressman." Paul Rogers was a good example, from Florida. Sarge said, "Okay. Set up a luncheon. Let's you and I go to lunch with him." And we did that, and we repeated this on occasions where things were critical. And then another time, through the interest of Paul Rogers and through Oren Harris, a little conference was set up of some of the members of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Subcommittee; it was a little luncheon in the Speaker's dining room at the Capitol. And Sarge and I were there and had almost two hours to talk about mental retardation. This is the role that Sarge played. Mrs. Shriver did work with the federal officials at HEW such as Wilbur Cohen.

STEWART: What part or how did the whole White House Conference on Mental Retardation tie in with your efforts on the legislation? Or was this primarily aimed at building up the White House effort as far as the general Administration program was concerned?

RAY: Well, this, as you know, came over before the legislation was passed, but it was in pretty good shape at the time we had this conference. And we really planned this not to give a boost to the legislation, even though we might have had our pessimistic days, but the feeling was this, "Look, now we're devoting our time towards this legislation and getting it passed, but there is going to be these questions coming up about how is this going to really be administered? What is this going to mean to my state?" And with that in mind, we felt that a White House conference, with the prestige of the White House, ought to be called to get about seven or eight key people from each state into a conference and spend two or three days really going into what this legislation would mean if it was passed. And by the time that came up we were darned sure of this being passed, we just weren't sure of how much money was going to be in the pot. So the purpose was to interpret this legislation and exactly how it was going to work. And for this reason, that's why you had some inspiration, but you also had some people from HEW, from the operating agencies to actually be on the program to talk about it.

STEWART: But I think the key question I was asking was whether this was tied in with the passage of the legislation. And it wasn't.

RAY: No, it wasn't because we started planning it two or three months before that happened.

STEWART: And the legislation was pretty well under way.

RAY: Right.

STEWART: Would you say, in general, that in many cases it wasn't the opposition but the apathy that created the biggest problem?

RAY: Yes, I would because I don't really . . . It's kind of hard for a guy to say, "Look, I don't believe in mental retardation, or I think you're crazy." Yes, I think it didn't excite people. What is mental retardation? Something that excites the average guy more is highways, space administration, and it's not that there's anything wrong with those things, but they're more glamorous. And I think that was part of the problem that we faced. On a congressional hearing, it was getting good attendance at those from the Congressmen themselves. And I know that both Harris and Mills would encourage their committee members to get there for the hearings. I guess this is true of a lot of bills, but we faced a lot of this in MR. Yes, I think you're quite right, and I think it's still true, right now.

STEWART: Did you have much of a problem defending the levels of spending that were included in these bills, the reasoning behind the determination of the spending levels? This, of course, is something that budgeting people always talk about and use as an example, the difficulty of determining spending levels, in, for example, research grants in various health areas. Was this a problem at all for you?

RAY: No, because I'll tell you why. So darned little had been done in the field of mental retardation that we had not reached the point where it was hard to defend why you need fifteen million more or twenty-five million more. So little had been done in the field that we . . . What I had more trouble doing was saying that, "Look, what we're proposing here is way too little. Let's add more to it." And we had already agreed that we would not take that tack. I had more trouble holding myself back on that. I had no trouble showing how we'd spend this ten million and why that was more than needed in the field of research or university affiliated. And we had facts and figures on both of those, on the training of manpower and on the facility construction, the increase of maternal, child,

and health funds. We had the statistics of 33 per cent of the expectant mothers in this country were not receiving prenatal care. And it was hard-core data. So it was very easy as far as I was concerned.

STEWART: Was there ever a real problem that some people were criticizing you because these figures weren't high enough? Were there Congressmen who wanted to go further?

RAY: Yes, there were Congressmen who wanted to go further. I don't think it was so much in criticism, but they felt that we ought to ask for a more while the iron was hot; that maybe '63 would be a banner year--goodness knows, no one knew that a few months later the President would be assassinated--man, this is something; the President had made an address to the Congress, and we had this legislation up; that maybe we could have gotten a lot more through as easy as we could that amount. Yes, this came up--with some of the staunch people, now. This would be people like Fogarty and Hill and people like that.

STEWART: But, in fact, the amounts weren't increased over what had been proposed, I don't think, were they?

RAY: No, they weren't.

STEWART: Let's see, I'm about running out of questions. Is there anything you think we haven't covered? What about, one thing, the advisory committee? Wasn't there an advisory committee to Dr. Warren at the time?

RAY: Right.

STEWART: Did they play a significant role in the legislative efforts that you recall?

RAY: Not very much. There were some good, top people on it, but we really didn't use the committee right. We'd make our reports to them every time we met, and in some cases individuals could say--I could present a legislative problem, and somebody could say, "Well, I know how to get to that Congressman, and I'll do it." But I can't say that that was too significant.

STEWART: Yes. Well, is there anything else you can think of?

RAY: I don't know. I think that the Airlie conference, the President could not be there, but they had a telephone hookup. I can remember that the phone that Sarge used to get this set up with the White House--he was trying to give a little interpretation to the President, and quite a few of the delegates from some of the states happened to be standing around--and I can remember that Sarge called the White House and said, "Put the President on." And then when the President came on, he said, "Jack, we're all set here for you." And all the people standing around there that heard that--because I was there in the bull session with them later because I was one of them also because I had been a professional in the field--and this is just a small point, but it kind of charged these people up. The President came out over the loudspeaker through the telephone hookup and gave a message to these delegates, and later on, when the session ended, they had a tour of the White House. The President could not be there, but Eunice and Sarge were sort of the host and hostess, and they all got a charge out of that.

The only thing I can say is that all of this that President Kennedy--I like to say this, that mental retardation became a fashionable word, and I could see. . . . We talked about this earlier. It started a little bit with the Panel, but it came through loud and clear in '63. I suppose that after the assassination, among the other things that were written about the President, mental retardation took its place also, that it became a very popular word, and even though we have a long way to go, we got a tremendous foundation out of it. And when he signed the bills there, I remember that the

NARC was meeting in the Mayflower Hotel, and I remember that they invited people over, and the President--and this was three weeks before the assassination--took time to talk to the people about this historical moment. You know it's things like that that you still look back upon and it gives you a lot of--to people out in the field it still gives you a lot of get up and go to get the job done.

STEWART: Looking at the certificate from the American Association of Mental Deficiency, what part did they play in the passage of the legislation?

RAY: Unfortunately, that organization at that time--it's made up mainly of professionals--they didn't have a Washington office. They do now. And as an organization, they didn't really play a large part. But a lot of the individuals that make up the organization were the people that we contacted on the state level. So I think that this would be that part that they played. And of course, they're the guys--men and women that make up that group--they're the ones that put this legislation into action once it was passed. They're the people on the state and local level that are the doctors and psychologists and all of that. So they're the ones that would sort of put it into action. They do have a Washington office now.

STEWART: Okay, is there anything else you want to say? Are there any political problems that you recall being of major importance during this whole period? Or any problems within the profession, within the field of mental retardation that you recall were significant problems?

RAY: I don't know of any that were extremely significant. I do know this. We talked about some people that were not for this legislation. I

remember the vote in Senator Hill's Committee, that Senator Goldwater was on that committee, and his people in Arizona had talked to the Senator about mental retardation, and the Senator really couldn't find it in his heart to come and vote for it. But he was absent from the meeting, as I understand, on purpose, and he didn't vote against it. Some things like that. This is not any problem, but a great historical moment as far as we were concerned, was when Wilbur Mills in the House, on what was finally passed 88-156, got this through the House on a voice vote that was unanimously recorded. This was a bill that had originally been in a little bit of trouble. This was the increase in maternal, child, and health funds and had the planning for mental retardation. And this passed unanimously in the House. And this was played up around the country; it might not have been headlines in the paper, but with the people in the field, they were aware of this. And I think this was very historic, particularly in a rough congressional year.

STEWART: You mentioned the planning. Part of that was a one shot grant to each of the states. 2.2 million was the total.

RAY: That's right.

STEWART: But what that broke down to as far as individual states, I don't know.

RAY: About forty or fifty thousand.

STEWART: On the face of it, was there any criticism that the same amount was given to every state, big or small?

RAY: Yes, there was. There was quite a few criticisms. But again, these things came in later; in '63 it might have been milling underneath, but we knew enough of these people, we could say, "Now look, you're probably right, but we can't do much about that now. Let's get in and get it passed, or we're going to kill it." This is what I meant. Everybody was saying the same thing. We sort

of got our people to lump it. Now after that happened I don't mean that people didn't gripe. I'm sure this all could have been better, but we said, "Let's get the door open." And they did get the door open. So I think that was really the important thing.

STEWART: I think in terms of going from nothing to quite a bit, this is an interesting legislative struggle. You probably will never see the same types of problems in mental retardation legislation again because it was from nothing to something.

RAY: Well, I remember how fast this worked. When Sarge called me--and I had never met him--I was out in Portland for a meeting of the American Association of Mental Deficiencies. And that was after Eunice had come to Arkansas. He asked me to stop by Washington. I had breakfast at their house, Mike Feldman was there, he said, "This is what we want you to do." That was on a Saturday morning, and he said, "Can you start Monday?" I said, "Goodness, I'm running an institution in Arkansas." And so Sarge said, "What would it take to get you released?" And I said, "Well, the Governor would have to do it." And he picked up the phone and called Governor Faubus right while I was there. I wasn't in Washington on Monday, but I was there on Wednesday. That's how fast it worked. It was one of those peculiar things. We had to go that fast.

STEWART: Okay, that's it.

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