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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

INTERVIEW OF
THE HONORABLE CHARLES PRICE
Retired Presiding Circuit Court Judge
for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit
of the State Alabama

as a part of the
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
of the
U.S. DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

Interviewed by Susan Yvette Price
Daughter of Judge Price and
Special Assistant to the Chancellor
Alabama Community College System
Montgomery, Alabama
October 21, 2021

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1 MS. PRICE: Good morning. My name is Susan Yvette
2 Price. And I have the honor and privilege of spending time
3 today with Charles Price, retired presiding circuit court judge
4 of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit of Alabama.

5 Welcome, Judge.

6 JUDGE PRICE: Thank you.

7 MS. PRICE: As your daughter, I have a unique
8 perspective. I've known, loved, and admired you all my life.
9 Not only will I be speaking to you today as your daughter, but
10 also as someone well acquainted with the law. I served as a
11 federal law clerk in this very building to Senior Eleventh
12 Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Joel F. Dubina when he was a
13 federal district court judge for the Middle District of Alabama.
14 I practiced law for more than 20 years in Seattle, Washington,
15 and I have both read your stories and I have lived your truths
16 my entire life.

17 Insightful. Courageous. Stubborn. Just.
18 Trail-blazing. Humorous. Impatient. Resilient. God-fearing.
19 Villain. Tenacious. Husband. Father. Human.

20 Judge, these are just a few of the descriptions of you,
21 both complimentary and critical, that others have shared over
22 the years. It's been quite a journey for a poor boy who grew up
23 on the edge of Montgomery, Alabama, literally across the rail
24 tracks, more than 60 years as a husband, more than 50 years as a
25 father, more than 45 years as an attorney, and 33 years as a

1 circuit court judge. In sum, yours is a life and a career
2 successfully realized through family, service, and servant
3 leadership.

4 I cannot possibly name all of the awards, recognitions,
5 and honors you've received at the local, state, and national
6 levels. You were the first in so many endeavors and broke
7 racial barriers in Alabama from the prosecutor's office to the
8 Montgomery County Courthouse Phelps-Price Justice Center that
9 bears your name.

10 You have received numerous awards from community and
11 faith-based organizations. You were the recipient of the 1997
12 John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award and the 1998 National
13 Education Association's Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian
14 Award. You have been honored twice by the National Bar
15 Association. In 2011, the street where you grew up was named in
16 your honor. A scholarship has been established by your
17 fraternity in your name.

18 As a member of the elite Special Forces Unit of the
19 Army, you distinguished yourself and ultimately retired from the
20 Reserves as a lieutenant colonel, Judge Advocate General's
21 Corps. And you have paved the way for, oh, so many young
22 lawyers of color. I think that's the definition of a living
23 legacy, one who spends life caring about the world and taking
24 action to try to make life better for others. What a journey
25 indeed.

1 Today, in the time that we have, I'd like you to unpack
2 that life a little bit so that others may gain a better
3 understanding of the human being on the bench. In William
4 Shakespeare's comedy, *As You Like It*, the character Jacques
5 defined the seven stages of a man's life. Now, clearly, I am no
6 Shakespeare. But I think you might be able to share your
7 narrative in five chapters, especially given the fact that your
8 book is still being written.

9 Chapter one, let's hear about your childhood. Chapter
10 two, let's hear about the soldier in preparation. Chapter
11 three, let's talk about the seeker of justice. Chapter four,
12 let's hear the judge's summation. Chapter five, the journey
13 continues.

14 CHAPTER 1: CHILDHOOD

15 Chapter one, childhood. I want to start with a
16 derivation of an African proverb to frame this period: "To know
17 the man, we must understand the child."

18 You were born May 9th, 1939. Where?

19 JUDGE PRICE: In Montgomery County, in a little
20 community called Hunter Station, northwest of the city of
21 Montgomery on the Birmingham Highway, commonly called
22 Highway 31, which was the highway from Montgomery to Birmingham
23 before the interstate was developed.

24 MS. PRICE: Were you born in a hospital?

25 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, no. At that time, there were no

1 hospitals that admitted Black people in the city of Montgomery.

2 I was born and delivered by a midwife.

3 MS. PRICE: Okay. Your mother's name?

4 JUDGE PRICE: Betsy Ellen Price.

5 MS. PRICE: And your father's name?

6 JUDGE PRICE: Alfred Price.

7 MS. PRICE: And did you have any siblings?

8 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. There were six of us. And so there
9 were three prior to me, I was the fourth child, and two
10 underneath me.

11 MS. PRICE: Okay. What kind of community was Hunter
12 Station?

13 JUDGE PRICE: Well, Hunter Station was an enclosed
14 community, about 650 square acres, purchased by a Black former
15 slave in 1865, Mr. Madison, who moved from the plantation that
16 he was on to this community, he and two or three other families.
17 And after that, it continued to grow.

18 MS. PRICE: What about the house you grew up in?

19 JUDGE PRICE: It was a typical house at that time. It
20 was three -- three bedrooms and perhaps a small living room,
21 commonly called a shotgun house. And that means that you could
22 stand in the front, look through the front door, through the
23 back door, with rooms on the side.

24 MS. PRICE: At one point, I know your father moved out
25 of the house. How old were you when that happened?

1 JUDGE PRICE: My mother and father divorced when I was
2 in the 6- or 7-year-old range, and he -- although he continued
3 to live in the same community. But they divorced and pretty
4 well, in my opinion, as I observed them, got along better after
5 they divorced than they did when they were married. They
6 maintained membership in the same church, and I would see him in
7 the community.

8 MS. PRICE: Did he play a role in your upbringing?

9 JUDGE PRICE: Not from a standpoint of a parent being
10 actively involved in a child's life. I would see him. He was
11 very polite. But no, my mother -- my mother reared me.

12 MS. PRICE: So share a little bit more, then, about
13 your mom.

14 JUDGE PRICE: My mother was a -- was from the city,
15 grew up in the community called Bel Air in an area where Alabama
16 State University is located.

17 And how she and my father met, I don't know. But she
18 was a hard-working lady who worked many jobs to support her
19 family. She worked at the old Jefferson Davis Hotel, Seller's
20 Grocery Store in Montgomery. Those are names that people still
21 remember today. And she was a very good seamstress. And so she
22 took in sewing and things of that -- that nature.

23 MS. PRICE: Growing up, what was your sense of your
24 economic status in the world?

25 JUDGE PRICE: Well, if you look at, as we classified

1 your status based on economics, we were -- it was a poor
2 community, a poor family.

3 MS. PRICE: Did you know you were poor?

4 JUDGE PRICE: Perhaps didn't recognize it at the time
5 because we were all on the same level. But as I grew older,
6 branched out into a larger world, I realized that we were
7 considered economically poor but spiritually very rich.

8 MS. PRICE: So Hunter Station was a Black community.

9 JUDGE PRICE: Black community.

10 MS. PRICE: Did you interact with whites, or were there
11 conflicts with whites?

12 JUDGE PRICE: Well, Hunter Station was a Black
13 community with a white community on the northern side and a
14 white community on the southern side. There were no other --
15 there were no interactions other than occasionally
16 employer-employee relationships.

17 MS. PRICE: Where did you start school?

18 JUDGE PRICE: There was a school, small school, in the
19 community, George Washington Carver Elementary School, a
20 three -- three-room school that we and the Hunter Station
21 community and the Black community attended through the third
22 grade.

23 MS. PRICE: So, now, I've heard a story about when you
24 were around seven years old. You experienced a life-threatening
25 health scare that effectively put your schooling on hold.

1 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

2 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Well, at around seven years old, perhaps
4 in the second or third grade, I had a very serious health
5 problem. And it lingered for a while because at the time, there
6 were no doctors that were readily treating Black people. There
7 were two who would treat Black folks -- you had to go in the
8 back door or side door -- and that was Dr. Martin and
9 Dr. Hubbard. And so my appendix ruptured. Didn't know what it
10 was. After suffering through the pain and discomfort for quite
11 some time, my mother finally took me to Dr. Hubbard.
12 Dr. Hubbard had a small clinic on the corner of Lake and Hall
13 Street near Oak Park, and he would treat Black patients there.
14 They would put you on a gurney and lift you up to the second
15 floor, wherever the clinic waiting room was. And I remember
16 that.

17 And Dr. Hubbard operated, going in through my stomach
18 first and, of course, didn't understand that really what had
19 happened was my appendix -- appendix had burst on the right
20 side -- very serious operation, I understand -- and treated me.
21 That did delay me for about a year or year and a half in school
22 because it was treatment at home, aftercare, and back -- many
23 trips back to the doctor.

24 MS. PRICE: So if I understand it correctly, they
25 didn't know when they went in --

1 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

2 MS. PRICE: -- that you actually had appendicitis.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Absolutely.

4 MS. PRICE: They just knew that you had a stomach
5 issue.

6 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

7 MS. PRICE: Okay. And then once they opened up --

8 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

9 MS. PRICE: -- they realized that your appendix had
10 burst.

11 JUDGE PRICE: Appendix had burst. Yes.

12 MS. PRICE: Wow. So during that recuperation period, I
13 know you and your mother had been close.

14 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

15 MS. PRICE: But did you grow closer during that period?

16 JUDGE PRICE: Well, yes. I remember very vividly my
17 mother coming to the clinic almost daily talking to the doctor.
18 And that was a phenomenal thing, a Black -- a white doctor
19 talking to a Black mother. I do remember that. And my mother
20 would work all day and come to the clinic in the afternoon and
21 struggle through getting transportation because we did not have
22 a car. And I grew stronger to my mother.

23 MS. PRICE: I bet she was one of your childhood heros.

24 JUDGE PRICE: She was.

25 MS. PRICE: Did you have any others?

1 JUDGE PRICE: Well, yes. As you look for heros, first
2 of all, my mother was my hero. And just in the community, a
3 hero is someone that you grow to admire because of what they do
4 and what they represent. And so in the community, I would see
5 all the fathers going to work. There was a -- there was a plant
6 in -- in the community, Standard Forge & Axle Company. It was a
7 good job. I would see fathers leaving home in the morning,
8 seven o'clock, going to work, coming back in the afternoon, four
9 or 4:30 from work. So I grew up understanding that working for
10 a living was a major and honorable thing. And so those men that
11 took care of their families and taught us sports and encouraged
12 us youngsters along the way were my heros. I didn't have to
13 look far to some other state or some other profession for heros.
14 There were right there in the community.

15 MS. PRICE: What middle school did you -- did you
16 attend?

17 JUDGE PRICE: The middle school was called
18 Lomac-Hannon, which was an Old Selma Road community which was
19 about five miles from Hunter Station on the west side of town.
20 And we attended that school through the sixth grade, fourth,
21 fifth, and sixth grade.

22 MS. PRICE: Now, going back to talking about work --

23 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

24 MS. PRICE: -- I understand that during middle school,
25 you worked as a golf caddy.

1 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

2 MS. PRICE: Can you tell us about that experience?

3 JUDGE PRICE: Well, there weren't any jobs for young
4 Black males or females during that time in the summer. You
5 either just idled away at home or basically engaged in some
6 activity that kept you busy. Some of us were able to do
7 construction work or work with brickmasons, which I did on and
8 off.

9 The -- the caddy thing became a source of income on the
10 weekend, mainly Saturday and Sundays, at Maxwell Air Force Base.
11 My community was four miles northwest of Maxwell Air Force Base.
12 So basically, walking to Maxwell was a fun thing because I
13 didn't have transportation and walking from Maxwell after
14 caddying half a day or a whole day back to the community was a
15 fun thing. So yes, I caddied.

16 And if the -- if the club manager liked you, which he
17 did come to like me, he would make sure, at seven o'clock in the
18 morning or eight o'clock, you would go out with the first group
19 that tee off. And sometimes you will carry double. That means
20 you're working for both -- two golfers and carrying two bags and
21 usually will come in about eleven o'clock, and a dollar and a
22 half apiece and maybe a quarter each or 50 cents each tip, and
23 you have made \$4, \$4.50. And that was a lot of money at that
24 time.

25 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

1 JUDGE PRICE: And you go back on Sunday, or you can
2 stay around on Saturday and try to get another flight that
3 afternoon, which means you could make about \$5. So on Sunday,
4 you would go back and repeat the same thing.

5 MS. PRICE: So I hear -- I don't play golf, but I hear
6 there are lots of lessons you can learn, lots of conversations
7 you can have on the golf course.

8 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

9 MS. PRICE: What did you learn?

10 JUDGE PRICE: Well, it was new to me because the
11 golfers were high-ranking military officers, lieutenant
12 colonels, colonels, a few majors. Very few captains or enlisted
13 men were playing. Basically, it was high-ranking military
14 officers. And I observed them and heard -- overheard their
15 conversations speaking very well, enjoying life, and I was
16 always curious about that. How did they get this advantage of
17 being in these positions when there were others, perhaps, who
18 worked as hard as they did but didn't have the opportunity or
19 the chance to -- to enjoy that type life. I never saw myself,
20 perhaps, enjoying that type life, although now I do play golf
21 and it was a learning experience. I was always quiet but
22 listening to them and observing them, the way they behaved, the
23 way they carried themselves. And I think there was some
24 advantage to that.

25 MS. PRICE: You were a teenager during the 1950s.

1 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

2 MS. PRICE: And the Civil Rights Movement ramped up
3 considerably during your teenage years.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

5 MS. PRICE: In fact, you were a teenager during the bus
6 boycott.

7 JUDGE PRICE: About 14 or 15 years old.

8 MS. PRICE: Did you have a sense that something really
9 big was happening in Montgomery?

10 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. Well, we had been -- the bus --
11 riding the bus was not a big thing for us in my community
12 because the bus didn't go beyond the city limits. And
13 basically, where Hunter Station is, at that time was considered
14 very rural, although it's in the city limits now. But it was
15 very rural. And so riding the bus wasn't a thing of high
16 priority to me. But once the bus boycott started, I recognized
17 that -- didn't understand it, but something big was happening
18 because on Monday afternoons -- and that's when the mass
19 meetings were, usually, on Monday nights around five o'clock or
20 six o'clock. My mother and others from the community would
21 gather at Mr. Willie Ashley's house, a man who had
22 transportation -- and a couple other families had cars -- and
23 they would meet at the church, Mount Pleasant AME Zion Church,
24 and they would go to the mass meetings. And then they'll come
25 back and talk about what was going on. Everybody was

1 spellbound by Dr. King's ability and oration and his message, so
2 something was happening and we knew it was big but didn't
3 understand the gravity of it at the time.

4 Also, this was the time of the murder of -- '54, in
5 that range -- Emmett Till. And so we had that as part of -- a
6 part of the history of how to behave and what to do and not to
7 do. So those two events, it sort of helped shape my life in --
8 in a way. Yeah.

9 MS. PRICE: What were you told not to do? And how were
10 you told to behave?

11 JUDGE PRICE: Well, basically, you understood there was
12 segregation because you didn't have much contact with -- whites
13 and Blacks didn't have much contact.

14 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

15 JUDGE PRICE: And surely to be on your best manners, I
16 recall that, manners you were taught in high school and taught
17 by your parents, and to avoid conflict if at all possible.

18 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

19 JUDGE PRICE: And so those kind of things that -- you
20 knew your space. It became priority in your life. And you were
21 in a safe zone if you had good manners and responded to people
22 in a way -- very politely and move on.

23 MS. PRICE: I heard a story not too long ago -- I
24 didn't know this before -- of a time when you and a friend of
25 yours had stars in your eyes and set your sights on working and

1 being successful in the big city of New York. I think you were
2 around 15, 16 at the time.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

4 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that adventure and the
5 lessons you learned from that.

6 JUDGE PRICE: Well, like all teenagers during the
7 summer, you would like to make some money during the summer
8 before you go back to school. But like I said, there were no
9 jobs, really, available for young Blacks to -- to work other
10 than the opportunity to caddy and maybe at -- there was a
11 junkyard on the Birmingham Highway, the Kelly Junkyard, and they
12 would let us come up there and make a few dollars.

13 So my friend and I would go to the employment office --
14 and it was on Clay Street -- Clayton -- and apply for summer
15 jobs. There were no jobs available. And we would continue to
16 go back and apply every Monday morning, I think, and there were
17 just no jobs. And so they finally told us -- one of the workers
18 finally told us that there was a group coming through and they
19 were looking for workers. And if we wanted to be with that
20 group and find work, be back on a certain day at -- early in the
21 morning and we could -- we could perhaps join them in finding
22 jobs.

23 Well, we did. We went back and we told our mother --
24 our family, our parents. And I remember very vividly. My
25 mother was sitting on the front porch at the time. When I told

1 her what I was going to do, she told -- she didn't approve of
2 it, but she was not adamantly against it, but not approval. But
3 she said I'm going to be back in about two weeks.

4 So we went up there that morning, and the group was --
5 we understood they were going to New York. Now, we didn't know
6 where New York was, to be honest with you. We thought New York
7 was just a couple miles away and when we got -- get there, we
8 would leave the truck -- we thought we were going on a truck --
9 and get a job and make some money and come back home.

10 Well, when we got there, we discovered that this group
11 of individuals were riding in a converted old school bus and
12 they consisted of adults, children, women, men. And they talked
13 to us. And we said, yes -- we were very daring -- we'll go with
14 you. And what we discovered, they were migrant workers that
15 were leaving Florida who -- seasonal workers. They would travel
16 around from farms to different places and work, and that's how
17 they took care of their families.

18 So we got on the bus, and it took us two or three
19 days -- about two days -- more than two days to get to New York,
20 to Hamilton, New York. Now, that was all strange to us. All
21 these individuals knew each other. We didn't know them and they
22 didn't know us.

23 So we got there and we were assigned sleeping quarters,
24 which were shanties, discovered that they cooked their food
25 open -- on the open fires, without any exaggeration, sewage

1 running, raw sewage running. And how in the world could people
2 live like that? I mean, my living condition was poor, but it
3 surely wasn't like that.

4 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

5 JUDGE PRICE: So we -- we were there in Hamilton, New
6 York. And it was a farm where they were picking beans. And
7 they were paying 50 cents a hamper. Well, we -- I discovered
8 after a couple days picking -- I wasn't going to make any money
9 because it took me forever to pick a hamper of beans. So after
10 a week, we left that camp -- literally escaped -- one morning.
11 You have to get up at five o'clock in the morning. You catch
12 the truck or the trailer, really, large trailers with people on
13 it, to go out to the field. So we went the other direction.
14 I'm sure they were looking for us.

15 But anyway, we were hitchhiking and a guy came -- a man
16 came along with -- that worked and was supervisor of another
17 farm. And he picked us up and then asked where we were going
18 and where we had been, and we told him. And he said, well,
19 we've got a farm up here. Come with me, you can go to work
20 here. So we went to that farm, and he said, we pay 75 cents a
21 hamper. But what we discovered was, to make a long story short,
22 they were picking wax beans or yellow beans. And it took twice
23 as many wax beans or yellow beans to fill a hamper than green
24 beans. So we were still getting cheated because they were
25 paying 75 cents a hamper but we had to do twice as much work.

1 So after a week, we left and hitchhiked into the city
2 of Hamilton. And I remember we stopping at a -- at a drugstore
3 that had a phone booth outside when we used to have the phone
4 booths. And my friend, James Traylor, his father had a good job
5 and he just got tired of -- didn't see an end to what we were
6 doing, so he called his father and they sent him -- wired him a
7 ticket through Western Union, I believe, to come home. I
8 wouldn't dare -- well, first of all, my mother didn't have a
9 telephone, and I'm sure she didn't have any money. So I had to
10 figure out how this was going to work.

11 So we -- I hitchhiked on into Syracuse, Syracuse, New
12 York, went to the bus station, tried to join the Navy but I
13 didn't have my birth certificate and wasn't of age. So I sat in
14 the bus station for about three nights and two days, obviously
15 not understanding big city life, seeing youngsters coming
16 through, and I'm convinced they were -- wasn't up to anything
17 good. But -- and that was all new to me.

18 So I sat there and tried to figure out how am I going
19 to get a job, what am I going to do. But anyway, there was a
20 sign near the office that said Travelers Aid -- I was at the
21 Greyhound bus station -- Travelers Aid. And those signs were
22 very prominent during that time in the bus station. And one
23 morning, about the third morning, people were lining up,
24 families with children and husbands and wives, and I figured out
25 they were -- whatever they were doing, they were trying to get

1 some help from this particular office. And I got in the front
2 of the line and went in and talked to the gentleman, told him I
3 was from Alabama, I was headed to tenth grade, and whatever else
4 he asked me. And he gave me a broom to sweep the office and
5 clean up in the office. And as the next family came in asking
6 for help, I heard him say that they only send out one family a
7 day, and he was going to send that boy who was cleaning up. So
8 I was happy about that.

9 And he talked to me because I -- I was about 16, 17.
10 And he talked to me, and he said, if I send you home, will you
11 go back to school? I said, well, you send me home, I'll just --
12 I'll stay in school. And he did. Gave me a ticket. I believe
13 he gave me -- I recall money for food, about \$2. I bought some
14 food. I found a Greyhound bus station -- found a Greyhound bus
15 and returned to Montgomery about two years -- two weeks and a
16 day after I left, which the prophecy of my mother was proven to
17 be correct.

18 MS. PRICE: Did your mother say, I told you so?

19 JUDGE PRICE: No. She was happy to see me. I'm sure
20 she was thinking that, but she didn't rub it in on me. But
21 that -- now, my friends did, but she didn't.

22 MS. PRICE: What an amazing story --

23 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

24 MS. PRICE: -- because this is in the 1950s.

25 JUDGE PRICE: 1950s, yes.

1 MS. PRICE: And Travelers Aid really was run by a white
2 male.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

4 MS. PRICE: And most of the families who needed aid
5 were white families?

6 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

7 MS. PRICE: And yet he was willing to put you in the
8 front of the line --

9 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

10 MS. PRICE: -- and send you home.

11 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

12 MS. PRICE: Did you ever keep up with him or touch base
13 with him?

14 JUDGE PRICE: You know, that was my intention once I
15 got older and was -- had some means, financial means, to try to
16 contact that particular office. I never did. But what it
17 did -- I didn't contact that particular office, but it sure made
18 me very sensitive toward people traveling, especially with kids,
19 who needed help. And I've been very generous with helping
20 people in need out of that experience.

21 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh. How about the interaction and
22 observations of the migrant workers? How did that affect you?

23 JUDGE PRICE: That's a terrible life. We read about
24 them in California. Chavez, you know, organized the farm
25 workers in California. We don't understand, unless you study

1 that -- that group, the kind of life they live. But they're
2 taking care of children and women and hard-working folks. And
3 if given the opportunity in the general society, they perhaps
4 could have better jobs. But you get -- they get locked into
5 that type of work, usually come into the country to do seasonal
6 work or your life get burdened down with children and family
7 doing that kind of work, so you're locked in. And, you know,
8 I'm very sympathetic and open toward helping those type
9 individuals.

10 MS. PRICE: So you're back. You're moving into your
11 high school years.

12 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

13 MS. PRICE: I understand you were an athlete. What
14 sport did you --

15 JUDGE PRICE: I played baseball, ran track in high
16 school.

17 MS. PRICE: Okay.

18 JUDGE PRICE: And my family -- in my family, males were
19 very good athletes, baseball players. I wasn't that good, but
20 they put me in the game to make the number since I was a Price,
21 and the Price family could put nine persons on the diamond and
22 have some left over. So I got in the mix and got recognized as
23 a person who could play baseball. But I did run track in high
24 school.

25 MS. PRICE: You were also on the debate team, weren't

1 you?

2 JUDGE PRICE: I was on the debate team.

3 MS. PRICE: Okay. What led you to debate?

4 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I always -- out of Sunday School
5 and church, I guess, always participated in giving speeches and
6 giving you opinions on certain things. And so there was a
7 belief by my mother and others in the community that I was going
8 to be a preacher. Later, I was going to be a preacher or a
9 lawyer.

10 MS. PRICE: Okay.

11 JUDGE PRICE: And -- and I just -- that just followed
12 me through high school, and some of the teachers encouraged me
13 to join the debate team.

14 MS. PRICE: Okay. I think many folks here in
15 Montgomery might be surprised to learn that you once worked at
16 one of our storied eateries.

17 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

18 MS. PRICE: Chris' Hot Dogs.

19 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

20 MS. PRICE: How did that job come about?

21 JUDGE PRICE: I was in the eleventh grade. A friend of
22 mine worked at Chris' Hot Dog Restaurant -- or Stand, it was
23 called. He worked in the morning. He would go down at five
24 o'clock in the morning and pack the boxes and clean up and then
25 come to school. And a job came open in the afternoon from four

1 to eight. He told me about it. I went down, talked to the
2 manager, a gentleman named Gus Lezos. He hired me.

3 So I would leave Carver School on Fairview Avenue, walk
4 downtown -- very seldom did I catch the bus -- and get downtown
5 about four o'clock, work until ten minutes to eight, leave
6 Chris' Hot Dog Stand on Dexter Avenue, go down to the Trailway
7 bus station that was down around Molton Street, catch the bus at
8 night going -- it was going to Birmingham, but it had to go the
9 Birmingham Highway, so it would go through Hunter Station. And
10 that's when you could pull a cord, the bell would go off. And
11 the bus driver really knew the stops, and it would stop on the
12 Birmingham Highway in front of New Hope Baptist Church. I would
13 get off and walk home.

14 MS. PRICE: So tell me about that experience working at
15 Chris'.

16 JUDGE PRICE: Well, it was -- I was -- I was a hard
17 worker. I was very mannerable. And so Gus -- if you go into
18 Chris' Hot Dog Stand today, it's set up the same way. It just
19 celebrated its hundredth year and there hadn't been any changes,
20 to be honest with you. And there's a cash register up front
21 that was used primarily for the goods -- the merchandise that
22 was sold up front, which at that time, Chris' stand sold all the
23 major magazines, the major newspapers -- *New York Times* and
24 those type things. And the -- the soda machines -- the soda
25 boxes were up front. They sold liquor, spirits, by the pint or

1 half a pint. They were up front.

2 So really, if you're going to buy those things, you
3 stop at that cash register up front. And then if you're going
4 to buy the food, you'll walk back to the steam table where they
5 were fixing the food and serving hot dogs. There was a cash
6 register there, which is still there today. It's set up the
7 same way.

8 And Gus -- he was -- all of these individuals came over
9 from Greece. They were Greeks. And Gus was an orphan, I
10 believe, that came over, and Mr. Chris gave him a chance. And
11 he was a very, very good person.

12 And after a period of time, he told me to work the cash
13 register up front. Now, that didn't go over well with a lot of
14 people coming in, particularly the night crowd. And they made
15 all kind of comments and surely went back there and talked to
16 Gus, but it didn't deter him. And even those who wanted to pass
17 me and dis me because they weren't going to deal -- he would
18 send them back up there. And after a period of time, that night
19 crowd sort of got used to that I was operating the cash register
20 up front, which perhaps was the first African-American,
21 particularly young child, to operate a cash register in a white
22 establishment that catered primarily to white people who had
23 some problem with it but got used to it. And it was because of
24 Gus Lezos, the manager, who was not going to change that
25 situation.

1 MS. PRICE: That's quite a statement to make --

2 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

3 MS. PRICE: -- for a very popular restaurant --

4 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

5 MS. PRICE: -- eatery to have --

6 JUDGE PRICE: My picture is on the wall there now. In
7 fact, they requested I take a photograph, and my picture is on
8 the wall next to Gus with some other photographs.

9 MS. PRICE: Did you keep in touch with Gus?

10 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. Every time I came home and --
11 oh, yes, and after I moved back to Montgomery. I keep in
12 contact with the family now that own the restaurant, and, you
13 know, sure.

14 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh. And you were actually a
15 participant in the funeral services too.

16 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. When Gus died, the Greek Orthodox
17 Church was on Mt. Meigs Road. And he had a sister in Detroit,
18 and she requested that I speak at his funeral and make some
19 comments. And I was at the funeral, and I went up to speak and
20 thought I was just going to -- in front of the audience, and the
21 priest called me on up to the pulpit, and I went up and made the
22 comments. So that was very moving to me, and I appreciate their
23 generosity and understanding and how appreciative I was for what
24 Gus had done for me. And, you know, I still go to the
25 restaurant now. And I'm just as popular around there as the

1 owner.

2 MS. PRICE: But what comes out of this is an
3 understanding that even though there was definitely a divide --

4 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

5 MS. PRICE: -- in the fifties between Black and
6 white --

7 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

8 MS. PRICE: -- and even -- and certainly in the
9 forties, you had a doctor --

10 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

11 MS. PRICE: -- who was willing to operate on you and
12 saved your life.

13 JUDGE PRICE: Sure. Uh-huh.

14 MS. PRICE: You certainly had the man in the bus
15 station up in New York --

16 JUDGE PRICE: New York. Yes.

17 MS. PRICE: -- who was willing to give you a bus ticket
18 provided you pledged that you would continue with your
19 education.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

21 MS. PRICE: And then even here in Montgomery, you had
22 someone who was a manager --

23 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

24 MS. PRICE: -- in a popular restaurant --

25 JUDGE PRICE: Back in the sixties.

1 MS. PRICE: -- who made a very public statement.

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Sure.

3 MS. PRICE: Amazing.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Well, in fact, I did make an effort to
5 find Dr. Hubbard when I moved back here to visit him to say how
6 thankful I was. He had moved to North Carolina. But his son
7 just happened to be a retired financial planner or investor and
8 was doing volunteer work in the county courthouse, Charles
9 Hubbard.

10 MS. PRICE: Oh, okay.

11 JUDGE PRICE: And I happened to see him one day and I
12 talked to him and I told him about that. And it turned out to
13 be his father. And his father had deceased in North Carolina.
14 But I did get a chance to express my appreciation to him, and we
15 became pretty close at the time.

16 MS. PRICE: Great. In high school, I believe you met a
17 young lady who would change the course of your life.

18 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. In the eleventh grade, I met a
19 young lady who later became my wife and became your mother, but
20 who was a very, very serious student. And I surely wanted to
21 talk to her and try to date her. And the type of student I was
22 and the type of student she was, I'm sure there was little
23 interest in allowing me to talk to her. But over a period of
24 time, I eventually persuaded her that -- that I was worthy of
25 talking to her, and she relented. And we became friends,

1 started dating the latter part of the eleventh grade, go to the
2 prom in the twelfth grade, eventually became my wife.

3 MS. PRICE: Great. And you graduated from high
4 school --

5 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

6 MS. PRICE: -- in 1959.

7 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

8 MS. PRICE: Were you the first in your family to
9 graduate from high school.

10 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. I was the first in my family to
11 graduate from high school. My older two brothers and sister are
12 very smart but have didn't the opportunity to do much beyond the
13 Black community. So both of my brothers joined the military and
14 served in Korea. And both of them ended up -- one brother was
15 in the Army and Air Force. One brother was with the 82nd, and
16 one brother was with the 101st Airborne.

17 MS. PRICE: Okay.

18 JUDGE PRICE: And I admired them, and I appreciated
19 them for joining the military, sending money back to help my
20 mother take care of me. And the good thing about it, I was able
21 to express that to them. One is deceased, and my oldest brother
22 is still alive. But I was able to explain to them how
23 appreciative for the opportunities I've had for what they did.

24 But anyway, I admired them. So I knew early, around
25 the tenth grade, eleventh grade, that I was -- I wanted a career

1 in the military. The military was a way out of poverty and out
2 of -- out of a local, locked-in situation. And so when I
3 finished high school, I joined the military.

4 MS. PRICE: So we're going to talk about that, but let
5 me -- let me ask you this one question. As you close this
6 particular chapter of your life, what lessons or revelations did
7 you take with you?

8 JUDGE PRICE: From --

9 MS. PRICE: All the way up through the graduation from
10 high school.

11 JUDGE PRICE: High school.

12 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

13 JUDGE PRICE: Well, you had to -- first of all, you had
14 to work hard. Now, I hear people talk about hard work. A lot
15 of folks work hard, but they don't -- they just sort of stand
16 still. So working hard is not the key to it, but having a
17 strong worth ethic, knowing that you've got to work for what you
18 get and that along the way, if you -- if you are honest,
19 trustworthy, show people that you want an opportunity, there
20 will be people along the way to -- that helped you.

21 And out of the New York situation, out of the Chris'
22 Hot Dog situation, and other events, that's what proved to me
23 to -- to be what you need to do. I found -- I have found in
24 life and even growing up -- and I look back on that. First of
25 all, you have to be focused. You have to have some idea of what

1 it is you want to do.

2 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

3 JUDGE PRICE: And it has to be something that you're
4 capable of doing. And you have to be focused on it. You have
5 to have discipline to pursue it. But the key thing, you've got
6 to have dedicated perseverance, because it's going to be a hard
7 challenge. And it was a hard challenge. But stay the course.

8 MS. PRICE: Okay.

9 JUDGE PRICE: Okay?

10 MS. PRICE: Let's go to chapter two.

11 JUDGE PRICE: Okay.

12 CHAPTER TWO: THE SOLDIER

13 MS. PRICE: The soldier, in preparation.

14 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

15 MS. PRICE: When I think about the stories you've told
16 me regarding this period of your life, I am reminded of a quote
17 by Abraham Lincoln.

18 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

19 MS. PRICE: "If I had only one hour to chop down a
20 tree, I would spend the first 45 minutes sharpening my ax."

21 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

22 MS. PRICE: Let's talk about how you sharpened your ax.
23 Which one came first, now, marriage or military?

24 JUDGE PRICE: Military.

25 MS. PRICE: Okay.

1 JUDGE PRICE: I finished high school in May of --
2 perhaps -- during that time, you're graduating around May the
3 28th, 27th, '59. June the 10th of the same year, I went in the
4 military.

5 MS. PRICE: Where were you stationed?

6 JUDGE PRICE: I was stationed at -- I went to Fort
7 Jackson, South Carolina, for basic training. Since I wanted to
8 be a paratrooper, stayed in Jackson -- well, I went to Fort
9 Gordon then went back to Fort Jackson for advanced infantry and
10 from there to Fort Benning for jump school and from jump school,
11 then to Fort Bragg, 82nd Airborne Division.

12 MS. PRICE: So as you entered the military, what hopes
13 did you have about military service and what was your reality?

14 JUDGE PRICE: Well, there was no question about that
15 was one of the avenues I was going to pursue. It was a chance
16 to really find out what the opportunities were and what could
17 I -- what could I accomplish, and so it met all of my
18 expectations. Basic training. Advanced training. Being a
19 paratrooper was the elite branch at that time.

20 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

21 JUDGE PRICE: And I always wanted a challenge in life.
22 And to succeed in finishing jump school in three weeks -- that's
23 how long it was jumping out of airplanes, taking a chance on
24 your life -- that is still quite a bit of accomplishment for me.

25 MS. PRICE: So that is a factor -- or a fact that

1 people don't really know about you, that you were both a
2 paratrooper --

3 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

4 MS. PRICE: -- with the 82nd Airborne Division and a
5 member of Special Forces.

6 JUDGE PRICE: Well, Special Forces came second.

7 MS. PRICE: Okay. Also, though, known as the Green
8 Berets.

9 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

10 MS. PRICE: One of the most elite and highly trained
11 military groups --

12 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

13 MS. PRICE: -- in the armed forces. What led you to
14 jump out of planes and then join the Special Forces?

15 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I was stationed at Fort Bragg. I
16 went to Germany from Fort Bragg with the unit from Fort Bragg,
17 stayed in Germany for -- it was the airborne unit in Germany,
18 509th Airborne Brigade -- stayed in Germany a little over two
19 years, came back and was discharged. Bernice and I had gotten
20 married before I went to Germany. She was in college.

21 First of all, she was from a family that she had the
22 opportunity to go to college, and so she was in college. And I
23 couldn't -- even after serving three years in the military,
24 coming back to Montgomery, there still were no jobs for Blacks
25 that you could make a decent salary and have a -- go to college,

1 support my wife in college, and then go to law school.

2 So I -- she was at Tuskegee University. I went up and
3 talked to her, told her that I would rejoin for three more
4 years, and after I -- the three years, she would be finished
5 with college, working. I'll get out, go to college, and go to
6 law school. She didn't like it. I didn't like it. But it was
7 the best what I could see that would give me an opportunity to
8 accomplish what I wanted to accomplish. So that's what I did.

9 MS. PRICE: Okay.

10 JUDGE PRICE: So I went back to Fort Bragg. And at
11 that time, as Vietnam was heating up, Guatemala and the
12 Dominican Republic were in a scrimmage down in Central America.
13 So the Army activated a new group, the 8th Group, 1st Special
14 Forces. I had seen Special Forces troops at Fort Bragg. I
15 always admired them and thought what they were doing was quite
16 unique and elite. So I had an opportunity now to -- to join
17 this new group. So I took the test, qualified, went to all the
18 training, what we call to requalify as Special Forces training,
19 and went with the first contingency to Panama to set up the 8th
20 Group in Panama and stayed there over two -- two years.

21 MS. PRICE: While you were there in Panama, I think
22 that there was an incident.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

24 MS. PRICE: Yes. Tell us about that.

25 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I was on -- in Special Forces, you

1 know, you have an A team, a B team, and a C team. Well, you all
2 start off in the A team. But since it was in Central America
3 and you had -- although we took Spanish -- I took 360 hours of
4 Spanish in specialty training -- but really, you're going to
5 use -- the Latino soldiers are going to be more valuable in
6 Central America. So I was -- since I was crypto qualified -- I
7 was a cryptographer in communication, and I was assigned to C
8 team to work the COM center, communications center. And all of
9 us in Special Forces have to have a security clearance. Of
10 course, definitely to work the communications center you had to
11 have a security clearance. And the protocol was you go to the
12 communications center, you sign a log, sign in, if you leave,
13 you sign out, and that was the protocol.

14 And -- but the communications center was in the
15 building -- in the same building with the snack bar, and I had
16 been there many times, two or three of us working, the sergeant
17 in charge. We'll sign in, we'll go to the snack bar and get
18 coffee and come right back. We just go lock the door and vault
19 and go down to the snack bar and come right back. And I'm sure
20 that some -- along -- at some time, the warrant officer and the
21 supervisor was aware of that.

22 But anyway, on this particular Sunday morning, there
23 was a plane crash in Peru or one of the countries down in that
24 area, and I was the only one working at the communications
25 center. And I had to go down, get the message, sign in, take

1 the message to the duty officer -- it was a -- Fort Gulick was a
2 very small post, so the headquarters was about a block away from
3 the building that the communications center was in. So I took
4 the message and took it up to the duty officer. Coming right
5 back to the COM center, I didn't sign out.

6 In the meantime, the warrant officer came to the
7 center -- to the communications center, saw I had signed in but
8 I was not in the vault, but I didn't sign out. So he made move
9 to revoke my security clearance. And if you revoke my security
10 clearance, I'm out of Air Force -- out of Special Forces, but
11 surely out of communications. And happened to have a very good,
12 decent deputy commander of the company I was in, West Point
13 graduate, and he looked at the situation and quashed it. And I
14 stayed -- kept my security clearance, continued to work in the
15 COM center.

16 Now, out of that, there was a profound lesson I
17 learned, and it has stayed with me throughout my whole career.
18 And that is whatever profession you are in or whatever situation
19 you're in, if there is a protocol to follow, make sure you
20 follow it. Make sure you follow it. And so from that time on,
21 no matter how familiar I became with individuals or how lax the
22 environment may be around what I'm doing, I stay with the
23 protocol. And then you have no problem.

24 MS. PRICE: Okay.

25 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

1 MS. PRICE: Leaving the military --

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

3 MS. PRICE: -- you decided to attend Virginia Union --

4 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

5 MS. PRICE: -- University. What made that decision for
6 you?

7 JUDGE PRICE: Virginia Union University is in Richmond,
8 Virginia. I'm from Montgomery, Alabama. My wife graduated from
9 Tuskegee. She's from Montgomery, Alabama. Her first teaching
10 job was in Henrico County right outside of Richmond, Virginia.
11 I was in Panama. She graduated in '65. I got discharged
12 December '65, so her first teaching job in September '65 was in
13 Henrico County. And so that's how I ended up going to college
14 in Virginia Union. Virginia Union.

15 MS. PRICE: Okay. What was your major?

16 JUDGE PRICE: History-government.

17 MS. PRICE: What drew you to that subject?

18 JUDGE PRICE: I was always interested in history and
19 government and how this country was put together. American
20 history was primarily what I was interested in, although I took
21 a course in ancient history, took a course in, you know,
22 philosophy and all the great political thinkers, but I was more
23 interested in American history, trying to learn how this country
24 operated and how it was put together.

25 MS. PRICE: Did you have any mentors in college?

1 JUDGE PRICE: One -- well, there were professors who
2 were very nice, but one professor, Dr. Gale, who was a Ph.D.
3 political science dean, professor, open to students. And I was
4 a little older student because I had been six years in the
5 military, and so I would say that he was my mentor.

6 MS. PRICE: Did he encourage you to --

7 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

8 MS. PRICE: -- go to law school?

9 JUDGE PRICE: Well, he knew out of conversations that I
10 had talked about going to law school. And that was my goal. I
11 was going to law school. And so, yeah, I had discussed it with
12 him and -- I'm sure I had.

13 And when I ended up in Richmond, I stayed in the 19th
14 Reserve Special Forces Group for about a year and a half because
15 I had to work through college. I had to work at night, in the
16 afternoon, and it became too much. So I only stayed in the --
17 the reserve unit there for a year and a half. And all this
18 time, of course, I was an enlisted man. I was a sergeant when I
19 was discharged from Special Forces to go to college.

20 MS. PRICE: Okay. How long did it take you to finish
21 college?

22 JUDGE PRICE: Three years.

23 MS. PRICE: You were pretty motivated.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Pretty motivated.

25 MS. PRICE: How did you decide --

1 JUDGE PRICE: And working pretty well full-time.

2 MS. PRICE: Wow. How did you decide which law school?

3 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I wanted to go to Howard Law School
4 because that -- I only knew of two, Howard and Florida A&M, and
5 perhaps going to be others that -- because these law schools
6 were sending information to the -- to the colleges. And so
7 there perhaps would be others that I would have applied to, but
8 I knew about those two.

9 And in my senior year -- what happened was I started in
10 February '66 and graduated in May '69. During that time, a lot
11 of your major universities implemented or enacted what is called
12 affirmative action programs. And that was to increase minority
13 students' presence at the universities in different subjects.
14 And George Washington University was one of those universities
15 with a law school. And the dean, Dean Park, came to Virginia
16 Union to explain their program and to recruit minority students.
17 I went to the -- to the lecture or the -- whatever at the time
18 he was talking about and was impressed with him, so I applied.
19 And I had taken the LSAT, and my LSAT score was of average or
20 close to what the average score was at the time. And about a
21 week later, I got notice that I had been accepted and was going
22 to have work study, free tuition but work study. And, you know,
23 that's the highlight of my life.

24 MS. PRICE: So you packed up the family --

25 JUDGE PRICE: Well --

1 MS. PRICE: -- your young family in Richmond --

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

3 MS. PRICE: -- to make that move to D.C.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Well, what happened was after I had been
5 accepted, yes, I did. But the summer between graduating from
6 college and going to law school I did an internship at the
7 Department of Justice and then, that September, packed up my
8 family, my wife, and my daughter, you, and moved to Maryland to
9 attend law school.

10 MS. PRICE: So let's go back to the Department of
11 Justice, then, where you worked for -- during the summer. What
12 did you work on then?

13 JUDGE PRICE: I was an intern in the civil division and
14 basically did research and wrote memorandums and whatever that
15 was assigned to me.

16 MS. PRICE: The Hatch Act I think is one of the ones --

17 JUDGE PRICE: Well, that was when I was at the law firm
18 and --

19 MS. PRICE: Oh, okay. Okay.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

21 MS. PRICE: All right. So I'm getting ahead of myself.

22 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

23 MS. PRICE: So then you packed up the family.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

25 MS. PRICE: Moved from Richmond to Maryland so that you

1 could attend law school in D.C., which is the epicenter --

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

3 MS. PRICE: -- of government --

4 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

5 MS. PRICE: -- and an international place. But also
6 during that time, D.C. was one of the flash points during the
7 turmoil in the late 1960s --

8 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

9 MS. PRICE: -- protest over the Vietnam conflict.

10 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

11 MS. PRICE: You were definitely not in Alabama
12 anymore --

13 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

14 MS. PRICE: -- or even in Virginia. What was D.C. like
15 during this period?

16 JUDGE PRICE: Well, very competitive. And, you know,
17 just like a small fish jump out of a small pond and jump into a
18 large ocean, and you figure out how you're going to survive.
19 And that's what I was -- surviving was not the question
20 individually, but surviving in law school with a family was a
21 question. So the military training I had received benefited me.
22 The discipline I had received in pursuing whatever goal you have
23 set benefited me, because it was tough.

24 MS. PRICE: The first year in law school is never
25 supposed to be fun.

1 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

2 MS. PRICE: I remember that very clearly. It's a
3 mishmash of strong performers from around the country, around
4 the world. And for you, it was probably the first time in your
5 education that you found yourself in classes with an
6 overwhelming majority of white students. Was that an adjustment
7 for you?

8 JUDGE PRICE: Yes, because all of my experience in
9 education had been in a segregated system in Alabama through
10 high school -- well, then, in the military. And now, at
11 Virginia Union, my college was 98 percent black.

12 MS. PRICE: An HBCU.

13 JUDGE PRICE: HBCU.

14 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

15 JUDGE PRICE: One of the oldest in the country. And
16 now I'm in law school with all of these students who come from,
17 you know, major universities throughout the country, some of the
18 better students in the world, and they chose to come to D.C., or
19 GW, because they wanted to be in Washington. And they perhaps
20 could have gone to any university they wanted to. So yes, I
21 mean, this is very challenging, and I knew that. And it -- it
22 was challenging.

23 MS. PRICE: How were you received by white students?

24 JUDGE PRICE: Well, received very well because I was no
25 threat. I mean, you know, everybody was there to further their

1 education, not really concerned about who is sitting next to
2 you. No threat. You know, if it was undergrad, it would have
3 been perhaps a different story. But this is a professional
4 school now, so no problem.

5 MS. PRICE: What about by the faculty?

6 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, the faculty was very good. And I'm
7 sure the faculty had joined in the pursuit of affirmative
8 action. I'm sure somewhere along the line, they had passed a
9 resolution or knew what the university was doing and had to give
10 their approval. And there were faculty members who were very
11 genuine about the pursuit of giving other students that were
12 nontraditional students for that university the opportunity to
13 come. And the minority students that started with me were about
14 30 of us in the class of 500. And we were all from the South:
15 Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina. And Maryland, of course,
16 is considered the South. So that's where we were from. And, of
17 course, the full student body was from all over the world. Yes.

18 MS. PRICE: Were there any law professors in particular
19 that you admired?

20 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. Monroe Freedman, who was one
21 who was renown throughout the whole legal profession. He was
22 known for -- an expert on ethics, and his claim to fame was that
23 he had received his master in law from Harvard, I believe, at
24 19, had written books. In fact, he taught contracts and -- that
25 was one course he taught and, you know, we used his book. And

1 he wore it well, but he also was a guy you just admired and you
2 wanted to be like. If you're going to be a lawyer, you wanted
3 to be like Monroe Freedman. And he was very, very strict on --
4 on lawyers' behavior and how they should behave and act in the
5 profession.

6 Then there was Professor Rothschild, who was another
7 one who was very supportive, and Professor Harold Greene who
8 taught constitutional law, just -- and Professor Seidelson, who
9 was from Pittsburgh and had won the largest case -- verdict in
10 Pittsburgh in practice, and he taught evidence. And so, yeah,
11 these were professors that you gravitated to because they were
12 so open and helpful and welcoming to you -- or to me and
13 minority students.

14 MS. PRICE: I remember reading about Monroe Freedman in
15 my law school class --

16 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

17 MS. PRICE: -- because he was one of the architects of
18 professional responsibility.

19 JUDGE PRICE: Right. Sure.

20 MS. PRICE: And was just a very well-admired --

21 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

22 MS. PRICE: -- ethicist.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

24 MS. PRICE: Yeah. And he died just a couple years ago,
25 I think.

1 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Right. He was teaching at Hofstra
2 when he died.

3 MS. PRICE: Yeah. So how did you fare that first
4 semester?

5 JUDGE PRICE: Well, this was -- well, the competition
6 was just going to be great, you know. And so my experience,
7 like I say, had been at a segregated system. So -- and my
8 experience had been if a professor assigned -- give an
9 assignment, you take the book, the textbook, and you start on
10 what page he said, page 1 through 50, you just read the pages
11 and every word on the pages, and that's what you discuss.

12 Well, in law school, there are a whole lot of different
13 ways to learn the subject. And that first semester, I didn't
14 know there were other material that was ancillary to the book,
15 textbook, that you could learn. And if you were an extremely
16 good writer, you could take that ancillary material and pass
17 these courses. And that's called Gilbert's and CliffsNotes.
18 And if I had known about them -- perhaps didn't have the money
19 to buy them, but I didn't know about them. So that first
20 semester, as you know, your grades are posted not by names, but
21 by numbers.

22 MS. PRICE: Right.

23 JUDGE PRICE: So at the end of the semester and
24 whenever they said the grades were going to be posted, everyone
25 would go out and go to the board, the bulletin board, and find

1 their grades. And that first semester, I had -- I passed. I
2 had about one B and a bunch of Cs. Didn't make a D. And that
3 was a -- that was a major accomplishment in that competition.

4 MS. PRICE: Right.

5 JUDGE PRICE: But I decided -- some of these students,
6 I noticed, would be in class with us and they would disappear
7 for about two weeks on vacation someplace and, coming back,
8 making these great grades. And I'm trying to figure why is
9 this. And it didn't take long for me to understand and
10 acknowledge they had a better education than I had and they were
11 better writers than I was.

12 So what I did, then, I was never known -- I was a good
13 thinker, but I was never known to be a great writer. And in law
14 school, that is -- that's what will get you through. You don't
15 have to be a great thinker if you're a good writer. That's just
16 the opposite. So I figured out that -- Bernice, your mother and
17 my wife, was an English teacher. That was her major in college,
18 and she was a first-class English teacher. So I went and bought
19 a blackboard, eraser, and Crayon, and took it to the apartment.
20 And when I would get home at night, she and I -- because I had
21 been out of academic setting for quite some time, remember. So
22 she would go over sentence structure and subject and verb and
23 those type of things with me. And that second semester -- and I
24 worked on that for a whole semester at night. That second
25 semester when we went down to the bulletin board to see the

1 grades, I had some As and Bs. So what I learned is this. You
2 have to acknowledge your weakness and work on it. And don't be
3 ashamed of it. And that's what I did. That's what I did.

4 MS. PRICE: What about study groups? That's also --

5 JUDGE PRICE: I had study groups. Yes, there was four
6 of us in the -- you know, near the end of the semester, you
7 start pairing off with individuals. And there were four of us
8 about the same age, because three of them had -- four of them
9 had master degrees -- three of them had master degrees. One was
10 a captain in the Coast Guard on active duty. Another one had
11 graduated from Stanford, had a master degree and had written a
12 book and was coming to GW Law School to be in D.C. and, you
13 know, engage in greater things. Another one's father was
14 president of a large bank in Philadelphia. And here I was. And
15 we would meet, and near the end of the semester, we met at the
16 guy in the Coast Guard's apartment. He was married, and his
17 wife was already a lawyer.

18 And we were talking about the grades. If we got a low
19 grade, what will we do. So -- and it was Monroe Freedman's
20 class. And the guy in the Coast Guard said, well, you know,
21 he's in the Coast Guard. That's no problem. The guy from
22 Stanford said he'll go to Israel and do work. The other fellow
23 said basically he'll go back to Philadelphia and work in the
24 bank. And my answer to all of them was, look, I'm coming back
25 because I don't have anywhere to go, and so I've got to complete

1 this course. And so we all made passing grades, and that was a
2 joyful thing to get out of Monroe Freedman's class with a decent
3 grade.

4 MS. PRICE: Right.

5 JUDGE PRICE: Now, he had that kind of reputation, but
6 let me tell you, he was one fine, great professor and very
7 caring in it all. He didn't flunk anybody.

8 MS. PRICE: Did you end up working during your law
9 school summers?

10 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. The first year I worked in the
11 library, work study. The second year I got a job as a law clerk
12 in one of the major law firms in Washington, D.C., Wald,
13 Harkrader, Nicholson & Ross, which was at Dupont Circle on 19th
14 Street, a very small firm, about 15. All of the lawyers there
15 were either from Harvard, Yale, Virginia, your law school,
16 Michigan. Harvard, Yale, Virginia, Michigan. And some of the
17 young -- three or four of the younger ones that had come back
18 from Vietnam was about my age, and so they treated me almost
19 like an associate. You know, I wasn't looked upon as a law
20 student. It was sort of you're part of the team, although I
21 knew I was not part of the team, but that's how they treated me.

22 And so I would go back and forth, walk from -- GW --
23 George Washington Law School is located at G and 20th Street.
24 And I would walk -- it's a block from the White House, two
25 blocks. And I would walk from GW down to Dupont Circle and back

1 to law school, take a course; in the afternoon walk from Dupont
2 Circle to the law school, take a night course; then your mother
3 would pick me up eight or nine o'clock at night. So that's
4 basically what I did.

5 MS. PRICE: Probably the first time that you really got
6 to witness what lawyers do.

7 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. Oh, I learned -- from that firm, I
8 learned how lawyers would think, how they talked, how they
9 approached the law, how they behaved, especially in a law firm
10 of that nature. I didn't see any clients because clients just
11 didn't walk in.

12 MS. PRICE: Right.

13 JUDGE PRICE: And these lawyers had -- what goes on in
14 Washington with the major law firms and those who are at the top
15 of the profession, they'll go to the government work, perhaps
16 will become a department head. They'll come out of government,
17 join a major law firm, then go back into government to lead a
18 department. And so they had the connection. And so I learned a
19 lot about what I didn't know in the law, and I would stay in the
20 afternoon after all of them were gone home, and I would read and
21 try to learn more about it.

22 MS. PRICE: As you approached the end of your time in
23 law school, what area or specialty of law did you think you
24 wanted to pursue?

25 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I always knew I wanted to be a

1 trial lawyer. I wanted to do trial work. And as I was
2 finishing law school, looking for a job or thinking about
3 employment -- because now the only one working in the house is
4 my wife, so I have to, you know, be concerned about where I'm
5 going to go to work. And I had some job offers, but I wanted to
6 work for the Teamsters.

7 MS. PRICE: The Teamsters?

8 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. Because I wanted to do labor law.
9 And the Teamsters was basically the most powerful union around
10 at the time, and I wanted to be part of working in that -- with
11 that group.

12 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

13 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

14 MS. PRICE: Well, you didn't go to the Teamsters.

15 JUDGE PRICE: No.

16 MS. PRICE: But I understand you received a surprise
17 call during your last year with a job offer --

18 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

19 MS. PRICE: -- in Alabama.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

21 MS. PRICE: Can you share that story with us?

22 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I had always expressed I wanted to
23 return to Alabama at some point. I had expressed that with --
24 when I did the internship at Department of Justice. I graduated
25 from law school in February 1972. So --

1 MS. PRICE: That's after two and a half years.

2 JUDGE PRICE: Two and a half years.

3 MS. PRICE: Okay.

4 JUDGE PRICE: So Ira De Ment was the U.S. Attorney in
5 Alabama -- in Montgomery. He and Bill Baxley, who
6 later became -- was Attorney General, came to Washington to the
7 Department of Justice working on some desegregation case. And
8 Bill Nelson, who I had worked for, who was the section chief
9 when I worked as an intern, talked to primarily -- mainly Ira
10 De Ment about I wanted to return to Alabama. Basically told him
11 about me as a person, had to. And Baxley, I understand, said,
12 no, he wanted to talk to me.

13 So I won't forget. It was a Thursday morning. I was
14 in the library at the law firm and received a call. And the
15 receptionist said, Bill -- the Attorney General, State of
16 Alabama, wants to talk to you. Well, I didn't know anything
17 about Baxley because I had been out of Alabama for 14 years.
18 And so I got on the phone, and he came on in his usual way and
19 said, hey, I'm Bill Baxley, Attorney General, State of Alabama.
20 I heard about you. I understand you want to return to Alabama.
21 I want to offer you a job. I want you to come to work in my
22 office.

23 Well, my ego, then, get hold of me. Well, you're the
24 Attorney General of Alabama, you're calling me, and I haven't
25 even applied. So now I don't have a job, haven't accepted a

1 job. But, you know, your ego get hold of you. I said, well,
2 you know, fine. Let me think about it. So he called me back,
3 and I said, well, let me send you my resume so -- see what you
4 think. And I sent him my resume.

5 But basically, what happened was he -- I didn't know
6 the first thing about Baxley. I had been out of Alabama for
7 quite some time. When he ran for attorney general, he had been
8 the youngest district attorney in the state of Alabama down in
9 Houston County and now the youngest attorney general in the
10 history of the state of Alabama. And when he ran in '72, he
11 told the Black political leaders and made a commitment that if
12 they supported him and he got elected, he would hire some Black
13 lawyers. Okay?

14 MS. PRICE: So there were no Blacks in the Attorney
15 General's Office at that point.

16 JUDGE PRICE: There were no Blacks in the Attorney
17 General's at that point.

18 MS. PRICE: Yeah. Okay.

19 JUDGE PRICE: So he -- so I said, well, okay. I -- in
20 the meantime, I had an interview with the Department of Justice.
21 And you -- now, excitement, I'm more excited about the
22 Department of Justice than I am about Bill Baxley or by the
23 Attorney General's Office of Alabama because you get one shot at
24 Department of Justice.

25 MS. PRICE: Okay.

1 JUDGE PRICE: I mean, that's it. And they hired what
2 are called exceptional service. You had to finish top in your
3 class or top 20 percent or what have you.

4 So I -- I came for an interview. And I didn't know
5 anything about Bill -- I didn't know any lawyers in Alabama
6 other than Fred Gray, Attorney Fred Gray, civil rights lawyer.
7 So I went up to Macon County and spoke with Attorney Gray to
8 tell me something about Baxley, and he satisfied my curiosity
9 about what kind of person Baxley was and why they supported him.
10 I talked to Dr. Joe Reed, who was president of the Alabama
11 Democratic Conference and -- I talked to him several times, and
12 he told me what type person Baxley was.

13 So I went back to Washington -- I had an interview with
14 Bill Baxley at the Attorney General's Office. And when I walked
15 in the office, I knew immediately he was the person I wanted to
16 work for and work with. His wife was Lucy Baxley. She was the
17 administrative assistant. And he was there. He talked to me.
18 And there was something about him that he convinced me that he
19 was the new breed of the state of Alabama, the new leaders,
20 going to lead this state into a new -- new place. And just his
21 personality and his honestness and the way he looked at things
22 and -- as we sat there and just talked, I knew he -- I wanted to
23 work for him.

24 But I went back to Washington. And I got the call, and
25 I had got the job offer from Department of Justice. So I called

1 him and told him that I had the offer from the Department of
2 Justice and I had opted to go to Department of Justice. He
3 understood it. And he said, well, I understand that. You only
4 get one shot at Department of Justice. But if you ever want to
5 come to Alabama, come home, just give me a call. You always
6 have a job.

7 MS. PRICE: Okay.

8 JUDGE PRICE: And that's what happened. And I went to
9 Department of Justice.

10 MS. PRICE: So closing this loop on law school for just
11 a second, you went from a terribly undistinguished first
12 semester --

13 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

14 MS. PRICE: -- of law school to graduating in two and a
15 half years --

16 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

17 MS. PRICE: -- with honors.

18 JUDGE PRICE: With honors.

19 MS. PRICE: That's quite an accomplishment.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. Hard work.

21 MS. PRICE: A lot of hard work.

22 JUDGE PRICE: Hard work.

23 MS. PRICE: So after law school, you did join the
24 Department of Justice. What division did you join?

25 JUDGE PRICE: Civil division.

1 MS. PRICE: Civil division. And what was the work
2 like?

3 JUDGE PRICE: Well, the work was -- it was exciting
4 work, the group I was in, because President Nixon had
5 established the stabilization program, which meant that you
6 could -- commonly called the Wage-Price Freeze Program. You
7 couldn't raise prices on any goods or entertainment or tickets
8 or anything more than 5 percent. And if you did -- if they did,
9 it was a violation of the law. So there was 25 lawyers newly
10 hired to -- to over -- work that program. And I -- I was in
11 that section.

12 MS. PRICE: Okay. So basically, you were receiving
13 complaints, then, from the public --

14 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

15 MS. PRICE: -- regarding violation of the --

16 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

17 MS. PRICE: -- wage-price controls. Did you end up
18 filing any lawsuits on behalf --

19 JUDGE PRICE: Well, as you stated, there were
20 complaints sent to Department of Justice. The one who received
21 those complaints would then send them down to the section chief.
22 The section chief, then, would assign different lawyers in the
23 department to work on that complaint, either recommend it be
24 closed or recommend you take action.

25 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

1 JUDGE PRICE: I -- near the end of the program -- end
2 of my tenure there, there was a complaint sent in by a
3 12-year-old young boy from Upstate New York who built and
4 painted model airplanes --

5 MS. PRICE: Okay.

6 JUDGE PRICE: -- as a hobby. And he noticed that those
7 packages with five or six bottles of different colored paints --
8 paint had been increased more than 5 percent. And so he sent
9 the complaint in, and the complaint came down to department
10 head. The department head sent the complaint to the lawyer in
11 the office that I shared for him to close it out. He was on his
12 way on vacation, the lawyer was, so he asked me to look at it
13 and recommend it be closed.

14 I looked at it, recommended just the opposite, that we
15 file the lawsuit, and I convinced the section chief that we do
16 that. And we did.

17 MS. PRICE: Okay.

18 JUDGE PRICE: And so it generated the largest rollback
19 of money that was received in the program.

20 And the way that case was settled, which was another
21 lesson to me, we got a call from the section chief one morning,
22 said we have to go up to see the Attorney General on the fifth
23 floor, John Mitchell. I had never been to the fifth floor. And
24 new at the Department of Justice, I don't know why I thought I
25 should go to the fifth floor. But anyway, we went to the fifth

1 floor.

2 And we walk in the Attorney General's Office, and who
3 do we find? We find a lawyer from Kirkland Ellis out of Chicago
4 and we find Abe Fortas, who had served on the United States
5 Supreme Court, the lawyers for the company that we had sued.
6 And the Attorney General simply told us, in essence, that the
7 case was settled and this the way it gonna -- what -- how it was
8 settled.

9 They had hired an economist to figure out how many
10 packages were sold, how do you make the reimbursement to the
11 public. And the way they figured it out was to put an extra --
12 an extra bottle of paint in the package.

13 MS. PRICE: Okay.

14 JUDGE PRICE: And after so many were sold, it would
15 reimburse the consumers by \$350,000.

16 Now, out of that, I learned this: that power and
17 position goes a long ways in getting things settled because Abe
18 Fortas and the lawyer from Ellis Kirkland had not talked to the
19 section chief and surely hadn't talked to me, the ones who were
20 doing the work.

21 MS. PRICE: Right.

22 JUDGE PRICE: They went straight to the Attorney
23 General in Department of Justice Main Office and got the case
24 settled, and he told us what to do.

25 And, you know, I respected that and -- and then -- but

1 what I learned from that was powerful people in powerful
2 positions can get things done. So we just have to be mindful of
3 that and try to be a bulwark between using too much power to
4 destroy things.

5 MS. PRICE: As we close this chapter, what lessons did
6 you take with you, starting with the military on through college
7 and then law school?

8 JUDGE PRICE: Hard work. Perseverance. Set a goal.
9 Be disciplined to stay the course.

10 There were all kind of reasons why I should have -- I
11 thought about dropping out of law school or college, go back in
12 the military. I was a sergeant. My wife was a graduate of
13 college. And there were many reasons financially -- you know,
14 in college, I worked as a janitor at Thalhimers Department Store
15 in Richmond from twelve o'clock at night until eight o'clock in
16 the morning and had a nine o'clock class. And if I -- I had to
17 do hygiene -- wash face and brush teeth -- at the department
18 store and, many mornings, walk to -- from downtown on Main
19 Street, walk to Virginia Union, which was at least two and a
20 half to three miles away -- or some mornings, I could catch the
21 city bus; it didn't take me directly to Virginia Union; it took
22 me closer -- but I had to do that. And, you know, you walk
23 through cleaning floors and bathrooms at night, figuring out why
24 you're doing this. And it always come back to me, you always
25 wanted to be a lawyer. You always wanted to be a lawyer. And

1 that kept me going.

2 MS. PRICE: Okay.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

4 CHAPTER THREE: THE SEEKER OF JUSTICE

5 MS. PRICE: Then moving to Chapter 3.

6 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

7 MS. PRICE: The seeker of justice. I am reminded of
8 one of my favorite quotes by Theodore Roosevelt. Justice
9 consists not in being neutral between right and wrong, but in
10 finding out the right and upholding it, wherever found, against
11 the wrong.

12 In 1973, your mom, who was still living in Montgomery,
13 became ill. Did that lead to the family's decision to return to
14 Alabama?

15 JUDGE PRICE: That was part of it. What happened is I
16 finished law school, walked across the street the next week and
17 took the bar exam without taking a bar review course because I
18 didn't have the money to take a bar review course, and I did not
19 pass the D.C. bar. And the Department of Justice lawyers wanted
20 me to stay there and take the bar again.

21 I had the offer from Bill Baxley. I called Bill Baxley
22 and asked him whether or not the job was still available. He
23 said yes, how could he help me get here. Well, the salary was
24 not -- not that much. Okay? And I told him, I couldn't come to
25 Montgomery on that salary. He said, well, we'll see if we can't

1 supplement the salary.

2 The next day I got a call from -- Dr. Levi Watkins, the
3 president of Alabama State University, called me and told me
4 that Bill Baxley had called him and told him about me, that I
5 wanted to return to Alabama but the salary in the Attorney
6 General's Office was not sufficient for me to -- to return to
7 Alabama, and I had a job, if I wanted it, as an adjunct
8 professor at Alabama State, where I taught political science,
9 the great political thinkers, for eight years. And that's how I
10 returned to Montgomery as assistant attorney general in -- in
11 '75 -- no, '73.

12 MS. PRICE: '73.

13 JUDGE PRICE: In the meantime, there was an
14 African-American in the office.

15 MS. PRICE: Okay.

16 JUDGE PRICE: And that was Judge Thompson.

17 MS. PRICE: Okay.

18 JUDGE PRICE: The longest serving judge in this
19 courthouse.

20 MS. PRICE: So you've mentioned before that you were a
21 great admirer of Bill Baxley.

22 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

23 MS. PRICE: And tell us a little bit more what drew you
24 to him and why you admired him so greatly.

25 JUDGE PRICE: Because he was one of those young white

1 males that, as I understand it, participated in the Civil Rights
2 Movement at the University of Alabama against Wallace standing
3 in the door, against segregation, and participated in -- on the
4 right side. Plus he convinced me this -- this is a new breed.
5 And he just convinced me that he wanted to do great things for
6 the state of Alabama and to move Alabama to another level, and I
7 was just convinced of that. Plus his personality was such that
8 just -- I wanted to be a nationally known trial lawyer. And
9 Baxley had a reputation of being one of the better trial lawyers
10 in the state of Alabama when he was DA. And it was something
11 about him, just a halo over his head and a glow about him. And
12 his personality and what he's talked about and -- and what --
13 the approach he wanted to take in moving Alabama forward just
14 convinced me that's who I wanted to work for and that's where I
15 wanted to work.

16 MS. PRICE: So often, the Attorney General's Office is
17 really good preparation for leadership roles or political
18 office. During your time there, you worked with a dream team --

19 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

20 MS. PRICE: -- of individuals who would eventually
21 become the who's who among great leaders, lawyers, and judges in
22 Alabama. Can you name some of the folks you worked with?

23 JUDGE PRICE: Well, as I said, Judge Thompson, Myron
24 Thompson, who is the longest serving judge in this courthouse;
25 Judge Sally Greenhaw, who became circuit judge in Montgomery

1 County; George Beck, who was a deputy attorney general, who
2 became U.S. Attorney here; George Royer, a lawyer up in
3 Huntsville, a well-known lawyer; William McKnight, another
4 well-known lawyer; Judge McPherson, Vanzetta McPherson; her
5 husband, Winston Durant; Hank Caddell; Julian McPhillips --

6 MS. PRICE: Goodness.

7 JUDGE PRICE: -- Gil Kendrick; Davis, Milton Davis;
8 Jock Smith. All of us came through the Attorney General's
9 Office. And they are still serving -- many of them are still
10 serving out in the community in some capacity today.

11 MS. PRICE: Great recognized leaders out there. What
12 division were you assigned to?

13 JUDGE PRICE: Criminal division.

14 MS. PRICE: Criminal division. So tell us, what's a
15 young Black assistant attorney general in Alabama in the
16 mid-seventies doing traveling the roads of DeKalb County?

17 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I wanted to be an accomplished
18 trial lawyer, and I was looking for work to -- work to establish
19 that. And like I said, Bill Baxley was one who, if he hired
20 you, he was going to send you where the need was and stand
21 behind you. He was never going to -- the type of employer that
22 would protect himself. Always protect his employees.

23 So there was a person who -- named Hammond -- we called
24 him Bozo Hammond -- who was charged with embezzlement, I
25 believe, and he was a department head of some department in the

1 State of Alabama. And he was charged, indicted. And it was up
2 in DeKalb County, and there was a motion hearing. And I didn't
3 know where DeKalb County was, but it was on the Tennessee
4 border. And surely they hadn't experienced -- I can't say none,
5 but surely not a host of Black lawyers operating in that county.
6 And he assigned me and gave me a state car and assigned me to go
7 argue that motion. I didn't know what I was going to face.

8 But I went up there and walked in the courthouse and
9 courtroom. And the judge was so nice and so professional to me
10 I was surprised. He had just been appointed -- Kenny Cole -- I
11 mean Randall Cole, who later became one of my best friends on
12 the bench when I became a circuit judge. He was a circuit judge
13 at the time.

14 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

15 JUDGE PRICE: And I was successful in arguing that
16 motion and came on back to Montgomery. And that was a great --
17 quite an experience.

18 MS. PRICE: Well, so you had that experience under your
19 belt. So not too long after that, you were given an assignment
20 that landed you in the newspapers in Alabama because you were
21 the first to do this job. Now, I've heard some of this story
22 from Mr. Baxley, but I want you to tell me your version of the
23 story.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Well, whether you hear it from Baxley or
25 me, it has gotten much longer and taken us much longer to tell

1 it now, but the substance is still the same. But we have been
2 expanded in the time to tell it. Yes, the -- the district
3 attorney in Escambia County had a heart attack, Mr. Henderson.
4 And the law enforcement -- the police chief, the sheriff -- the
5 clerk, and others in Escambia County called Baxley and asked him
6 to send his -- send a lawyer down there to operate as -- as
7 district attorney. Now, Baxley will say they said send your top
8 prosecutor and trial lawyer to operate as district attorney.
9 Now, that was under his authority and jurisdiction, when a
10 district attorney was incapacitated, to assign someone to go and
11 act as district attorney.

12 And he called me in on a Friday afternoon and asked
13 me -- that he wanted to send me down there as district attorney.
14 He didn't tell me where -- I didn't know where Escambia County
15 was and he didn't tell me. But I knew and found out how to get
16 there. And I said yes immediately, yeah, I'll go. And so he
17 assigned me a car.

18 And that morning, I drove -- Monday morning, I drove to
19 Escambia County. The head -- the main city is Brewton, drove a
20 two-hour drive, drove in front -- parked in front of the
21 courthouse and walked in and went to the clerk's office, put my
22 attache case on the counter, and said I was the new acting
23 district attorney. And the clerk, Mr. Parker, turned ghostly
24 white as if --

25 (Brief interruption)

1 MS. PRICE: Okay. So you want to pick up with you put
2 your attache case down?

3 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Sure.

4 I put my attache case on the counter. Parker, who was
5 the district -- circuit clerk, turned ghostly white and said,
6 what? You know. And as we started discussing that I was the
7 new -- new acting district attorney, obviously, it was a shock
8 to him because, like I say, they perhaps had only seen one Black
9 lawyer in Escambia County and that was -- A. J. Cooper from
10 Mobile perhaps had handled some prison suit over there.

11 And about that time as we're discussing and he's
12 objecting, the sheriff came to the clerk's office. The sheriff
13 was named Scotty Byrne, one of the most admired sheriffs in the
14 state of Alabama, admired by the people in Escambia County, all
15 races, and also admired, yes, and well-known throughout the
16 state. And he came to the clerk's office, and he heard the
17 conversation. He told Parker, no -- because he had been the one
18 who had talked to Baxley, and I'm sure Baxley had told him who
19 he was sending. So he said, no, he's the district attorney, and
20 he's going to be treated accordingly.

21 And so we left there and went up to the circuit judge's
22 office, Douglas Webb, Judge Webb. And he perhaps, one, had
23 already talked to Baxley or Baxley had talked to him, and he was
24 likewise accommodating. He said, no, you're district attorney.
25 We're going to extend everything down here for your -- to do

1 your job. And he put the word throughout the courthouse.

2 And so I went to the -- got the keys and went down to
3 the district attorney's office and discovered that he did not
4 have a secretary because at that time, district attorneys, if
5 they could type -- in these small areas and if they typed their
6 own indictments and pleadings, they could keep the fees from --
7 that were generated from these different cases.

8 And so I came back that Monday afternoon and told
9 Baxley that I couldn't type and if I could, I needed a
10 secretary. He called city -- State Personnel, asked them for
11 money, how to make arrangements to get me a secretary. They
12 told him there was no way to do it under the rules. He said,
13 well, break the rules and try to find somebody for Price to hire
14 as secretary. They did.

15 I went back the next day, put the word out, looking for
16 a secretary. There was a young lady had gone to college at A&M
17 and was back in Escambia County at Brewton, and I hired her,
18 paid her the highest amount they told me I could start her at.

19 Kept the office open eight hours a day. Had
20 preliminary hearings that Wednesday of the first week. Every
21 lawyer in the county, whether they did criminal work or not,
22 showed up at the courthouse. After the hearings, I never saw
23 all of them together after that because I -- my performance was
24 so good. And really became very much admired and -- and
25 respected in Escambia County and had no problem from that day

1 on. And, in fact, all -- all of the lawyers really were --
2 became good associates. Some became friends.

3 MS. PRICE: So I understand that initially when you
4 went down there, there was basically a habit of just allowing
5 individuals who may have been charged with a crime to just
6 leave.

7 JUDGE PRICE: Yes, just to get out of jail, I mean,
8 without bond. That happened that Monday morning. How the --
9 when I first walked in the clerk's office, there was a white
10 gentleman there who owned a pecan orchard, and one of his
11 employees was -- how this conversation started, one of his
12 employees was in jail. It had happened that Friday or Saturday
13 night or over the weekend. And he came up to get him out to go
14 to work. And I came in just at the time and said, well, hold
15 it. What is the bond? And they looked -- he looked at me and
16 the clerk looked at me and said, well, there's no bond. I said,
17 well, no, you can't release him. There has to be a bond.

18 And by that time, the sheriff came in --

19 MS. PRICE: Okay.

20 JUDGE PRICE: -- and that's how that conversation
21 started. And he couldn't just walk him out without putting up a
22 bond. And all of that was very new to -- to them. And, you
23 know, they didn't -- the clerk and the employer didn't know how
24 to take it, but the sheriff stood behind me. And whatever the
25 bond I set, that's what he had to make. Yes.

1 MS. PRICE: And during that first arraignment, did you
2 have a visitor, I think, from another county?

3 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. What happened, Henderson had called
4 a DA, a very popular DA from Henry County named Lewey Stephens.
5 And Lewey was a very popular DA, just like Baxley was, and
6 Henderson called him over to handle his docket. Well, he shows
7 up that Wednesday morning and said he was acting district
8 attorney. So I called Baxley and said, well, Lewey Stephens,
9 the DA from Coffee County, is over here. I need to know who the
10 DA is.

11 Baxley got Lewey Stephens on the telephone -- Baxley
12 knew him; they were good buddies in the National Guard -- and
13 said -- asked him, I understand, Stephens, what you doing over
14 there? And he told him. He said, no, Price is the DA down
15 there. And Stephens said, fine, you know, I need to -- I'll go
16 on back to Coffee County.

17 Well, once I got that straight that I was the acting
18 district attorney, I needed Lewey Stephens to stay there to help
19 me out because I had not worked a grand jury by myself.

20 MS. PRICE: Okay.

21 JUDGE PRICE: And so for a week, he stayed and helped
22 me out in the case.

23 Now, when Baxley -- when I arrived, I understand there
24 were calls made to Baxley that he would never get another vote
25 out of Escambia County by appointing me acting district attorney

1 in Escambia County. When I left four to five months later,
2 there was a petition and a group coming to -- came to Montgomery
3 and asked Baxley keep me there. You can't move our district
4 attorney.

5 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

6 JUDGE PRICE: That's what happened. And I have gone
7 back several occasions, in fact, to do the law day speech for
8 the bar, which is a grand affair now at Escambia County.

9 MS. PRICE: In fact, part of the story that Baxley
10 tells is that the very same people --

11 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

12 MS. PRICE: -- who called him initially and said, you
13 will never get another vote in Escambia County --

14 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

15 MS. PRICE: -- for sending that man down here, those
16 are the people who then turned around and said you will never
17 get another vote in Escambia County if you take him away from
18 us.

19 JUDGE PRICE: That's what I understand.

20 MS. PRICE: So -- so why the turnaround? What kinds of
21 things did you do?

22 JUDGE PRICE: Well, because -- well, I was competent.
23 I was competent, effective. I went down there to do a job. I
24 didn't -- I didn't -- I did the job in the best light -- better
25 than the district attorney had done the job.

1 I kept the office open eight hours a day. What was
2 going on in Escambia County was there were very little child
3 support payments, primarily, being made, because the office was
4 not open eight hours a day. Single-family mothers and women who
5 were trying to get child support would come up to the office;
6 the office was closed. Henderson never made that a priority. I
7 did.

8 The fathers of these children would go over to --
9 Escambia County is on the Florida line. They'll work in
10 Florida, come back, and abscond -- and wouldn't have to pay
11 child support. And there's a system called UIFSA that you file
12 a petition in the county you're in and send it to an adjoining
13 county, wherever the father is. That judge will bring them in
14 to enforce the order from the judge in the county where the
15 child is located.

16 I enforced that, and a lot of these women started
17 receiving child support payments and things of that nature. And
18 that was the big part that were missing. The criminal cases you
19 could handle. But those are the kind of things that kind of was
20 missing, somebody paying attention to just folks who got
21 problems and need to resolve -- can be resolved through the
22 district attorney's office. I professionalized the office,
23 hired a secretary, and kept the office open eight hours a day
24 and people could come in. And that's why they wanted to keep me
25 down there.

1 MS. PRICE: Just a couple of years into your work,
2 then, at the Attorney General's Office, you made the move to the
3 Montgomery District Attorney's Office.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

5 MS. PRICE: Why did you leave? And what did you hope
6 to gain in this new job?

7 JUDGE PRICE: Well, Jimmy Evans, who was the district
8 attorney for Montgomery County, called me one Thursday morning
9 and said that he wanted me to come to work for him. I talked to
10 Baxley about it. He said, well, yeah, that would be a good
11 thing to go down to that courthouse and help prosecute those
12 cases.

13 So I came down to interview with Jimmy and discovered
14 that he didn't have office space. At that time, the courthouse
15 consisted of annex one. And the district attorney had a
16 part-time DA and one deputy district attorney. That's all they
17 had. So there was an office for Jimmy, an office for his
18 secretary and for the chief deputy. When I got to the
19 courthouse, there were a couple of lawyers he had hired, some
20 waiting to take the bar, but they were out in the hall. They
21 had desks in the hallway.

22 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

23 JUDGE PRICE: So I talked to Jimmy. I liked Jimmy
24 because I had heard he was in the same mold of Baxley. In fact,
25 he had -- was well liked in the neighborhood I grew up in,

1 Hunter Station, because his father owned a sand and gravel
2 company in that neighborhood. And he was well liked in that
3 neighborhood, visited all the homes, and -- and my distant
4 cousin became his surrogate mother. So Jimmy is one that I also
5 wanted to work for and enjoy working for.

6 So I told Jimmy that I was not a hall lawyer and I went
7 back to the Attorney General's Office. And when he had an
8 office for me, I would return. He called me that afternoon and
9 told me he had an office. He had dislodged the chief deputy out
10 of his office. And I showed up that Tuesday morning, he
11 assigned me the office, and that's where I stayed for over two
12 and a half years.

13 MS. PRICE: What did you see as the advantage or the
14 thing that you would really gain from moving to the DA's office?

15 JUDGE PRICE: Well, it was local -- local, and it was
16 everyday trial work, working at the level that you're meeting
17 the people and associated with the victims of crimes and more of
18 a -- in contact with the -- with the community. And that's what
19 I enjoyed and wanted to do.

20 And, you know, the work was such that -- I wanted to be
21 at a level where I could protect the innocent but prosecute
22 the -- the guilty and protect victims. I had witnessed how --
23 the last thing a Black person wanted to do was go to the
24 courthouse, okay, because of the treatment they had received.
25 And I wanted to be in a position to help straighten some of that

1 out, to help make it comfortable for them to come to the
2 courthouse and try to get an answer to whatever problem they had
3 or whatever they wanted -- the question. And also I wanted to
4 try to do something -- with all the crimes that were going on in
5 the Black community not being prosecuted, not being pursued, I
6 wanted to be in a position to try to help the victims in those
7 kind of crimes.

8 MS. PRICE: Were there other Blacks at the time in the
9 DA's office?

10 JUDGE PRICE: No, no. I was the first Black district
11 attorney for Montgomery County.

12 MS. PRICE: Were there Blacks on the police force?

13 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. There were Blacks on the police
14 force, but they were -- they were very few and basically limited
15 to patrol.

16 MS. PRICE: Okay. How were you received in the
17 courthouse by the judges there?

18 JUDGE PRICE: Well, a couple of judges thought the
19 courthouse was going to fall down after I was -- came to work.
20 But there were two -- a couple judges that received me very
21 well. Judge Emmet, very supportive. Judge Hooper, Perry
22 Hooper, very supportive. Judge Marks, very supportive. Judge
23 Carter was part of that old scene, that old crowd with Judge
24 Jones from the old plantation group. He was making -- he was
25 changing. He was not -- he was not mean-spirited to me, but

1 I -- I realized he was -- hadn't quite gotten there. But Judge
2 Thetford was still locked into the old plantation crowd and
3 never changed.

4 MS. PRICE: Again, with the experience in the DA's
5 office, you worked alongside individuals who would become very
6 well respected all over the state.

7 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

8 MS. PRICE: Who were some of those individuals?

9 JUDGE PRICE: Joe -- Joe Espy. Judge Pool, who is now
10 the circuit judge in Montgomery County. Barry Teague, who
11 became the U.S. -- U.S. Attorney. Cary Dozier, who was from
12 Troy, who was successful in the DA's office and went back to
13 Troy and was a lawyer down there. And his father was well-known
14 with a lot of property, et cetera. Just an assortment of
15 lawyers. Sasser. George Wakefield. Those guys who are now
16 successful lawyers in -- in Montgomery, in Alabama.

17 MS. PRICE: You mentioned a couple of minutes ago how
18 much you really wanted to -- to help those in the Black
19 community.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

21 MS. PRICE: But often prosecutors are seen as the
22 enemy.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Sure.

24 MS. PRICE: So what was that reception like in the
25 African-American community, and how did you work alongside the

1 community?

2 JUDGE PRICE: Well, obviously, when I first started
3 working at the DA's office, the African-American community saw
4 me as someone down there putting African-Americans in jail.
5 Well, what they didn't understand, the ones I prosecuted were
6 guilty of a crime, and usually they were the victims of the
7 crime that was committed.

8 And so I -- I didn't shirk from my responsibility or my
9 job, but I was also protecting those who were falsely accused.
10 And so the word finally got out and got around that here's a guy
11 that knows what he's doing, number one. Number two, he's
12 approachable. You'll go in to see him; he treats you with
13 respect where in the past you had not received any respect. And
14 so over a period -- and there were some individuals who wanted
15 change in this community, and they would spread my name out
16 there that -- and really would go to battle in defense of what I
17 was doing. And some of the preachers at the largest churches
18 would invite me out to speak on special days and things of that
19 nature, and it all worked out pretty good.

20 MS. PRICE: Historically there has been tension between
21 police departments and the African-American community. Tell us
22 about the Whitehurst case.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Whitehurst case, he was -- Whitehurst was
24 a young man that was on his way home from work, had stopped to
25 buy his wife some flowers or a gift for her birthday, and

1 walking home in the area not far from this courthouse. There
2 had been a robbery at a community store not far from this
3 courthouse. The police was looking for the suspect and said
4 that Whitehurst was the suspect -- fit the description of the
5 suspect, which it later turned out he did not. And when they
6 wanted to stop Whitehurst to talk to him, he started running
7 away. And, of course, that's still happening today. Young
8 Black males don't want to be stopped by the police. And they
9 shot him in the back, killed him, up here on Holcombe Street.

10 And it turned out that the police on the scene admitted
11 they had shot the wrong person. And they didn't want to admit
12 that, but there was a local lawyer, Donald Watkins, who was
13 hired by the Whitehurst family to represent them, and he started
14 investigating the case and finding witnesses. And one of the
15 witnesses that he found that had given an affidavit saying that
16 he -- Whitehurst was a suspect and he heard the police tell
17 Whitehurst to stop and drop the gun, Donald Watkins found out
18 that that person was in jail in another county on that day and
19 obviously couldn't be where he said he was. And another witness
20 came up and -- under oath and said that he heard the police say
21 they shot the wrong witness -- the wrong man.

22 Now, the point was, though, after they investigated the
23 case and realized they had shot the wrong person and shot him in
24 the back, the police department got in control mode and see how
25 are we going to rectify this. So one of the lieutenants,

1 Lieutenant Humphrey, who, up until that time, had been an
2 investigator that I respected, he went to the police department,
3 got a pistol that had been put at the police department from a
4 prior case, fired it, and planted it on Whitehurst as if that's
5 the gun that Whitehurst had. It turned out to be bogus.
6 Whitehurst was shot and killed unnecessarily, had not committed
7 any crime, et cetera.

8 That case shocked the city. Mayor Robinson, who was a
9 decent, progressive mayor, resigned. The police chief, Ed
10 Wright, resigned. That's when Chief Swindall came on. Several
11 police officers lost their jobs. Some resigned because they
12 just couldn't participate in what had happened. Jimmy Evans --
13 I was in the DA's office. We worked the case. Grand jury
14 indicted three. They tried one. Mistrial.

15 MS. PRICE: These are police officers?

16 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. And just didn't try the other two.
17 And Whitehurst lost a civil suit over some technicality, and the
18 family has not been compensated, as far as I know, to today.

19 MS. PRICE: What did Whitehurst teach you?

20 JUDGE PRICE: Well, it taught me that there was still
21 just unfairness and prejudice and -- and we had a long way to go
22 to try to reconcile the difference in respect between the Black
23 community and the police, law enforcement, which is still going
24 on today, which I still play a part trying to reconcile between
25 the two, that gulf that exists. And I sure hope one day that

1 we'll be able to -- to bring that two together. And I think
2 we're making a great deal of progress on it. Yeah.

3 MS. PRICE: I remember when I was in seventh grade, my
4 class went on a field trip to the courthouse. And we were
5 sitting in the jury area in Judge Emmet's courtroom. He came in
6 and said, I am waiting for a gentleman to come in to address
7 you. He's a superior deputy district attorney. He is so tough
8 we call him Black Death.

9 Then you walked in the room and surprised me, because I
10 had never heard that term referring to you. Where did Black
11 Death come from?

12 JUDGE PRICE: I was called many -- several names. And
13 one was -- and the reason for that is that -- because in the
14 courtroom -- and I did not trivialize what I was doing. In
15 other words, I didn't play. I -- you know, I meant business
16 when I decided that a case was worth trying. Well, you know, it
17 wasn't competition or winning or losing, because I don't think a
18 DA should be in that kind of position. It's a matter of doing
19 your job. And if the facts are there and you do your job and do
20 it right, usually the jury will do, hopefully, what they should
21 do.

22 And I didn't -- I didn't engage in jokes. I didn't
23 engage in trivial type things. I was very serious about my job
24 and what I was doing, and so I was called Black Death. I was
25 called an SOB. I was called God reincarnated as being Black.

1 So I was called a lot of things. And, you know, I honored that.
2 I mean, you know, when people start calling you names, you know
3 you must be doing something.

4 MS. PRICE: I bet.

5 JUDGE PRICE: You're doing your job. And so that
6 didn't bother me. In fact, I sort of enjoyed it, you know.

7 MS. PRICE: Yeah. Yeah. I remember that day you sort
8 of enjoyed it.

9 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Right.

10 MS. PRICE: Talking about --

11 JUDGE PRICE: I tried -- see, I tried most -- I
12 prosecuted the major cases, the murders, rapes, robberies. And
13 we had some sensational cases that I participated in and
14 prosecuted. And obviously, the defense lawyers wasn't going to
15 like that. And, you know -- but they all end up being my
16 friends, but they'll call you all kind of names. And I -- I
17 enjoyed some of the names they called me.

18 MS. PRICE: So, now, you left the DA's office in 1977.

19 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

20 MS. PRICE: What were you reasons for doing so?

21 JUDGE PRICE: To go into private practice. I had
22 done -- basically established what I wanted to establish and
23 went into private practice. Uh-huh.

24 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh. And you became mostly a defense
25 attorney --

1 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

2 MS. PRICE: -- which is interesting. It seems like a
3 contradiction because you had focused so much of your career up
4 until that point in being a prosecutor and now you had become a
5 defense attorney. Was it difficult for you to make that switch?

6 JUDGE PRICE: No, it's not a contradiction, because as
7 a defense attorney, I would only defend individuals if I thought
8 they had a defense or were not guilty.

9 MS. PRICE: Okay.

10 JUDGE PRICE: And there were certain cases that I would
11 not defend, although the accused was entitled to a lawyer,
12 deserved a lawyer. Every accused deserve a lawyer. But I would
13 not defend rape cases. I would not defend child molestation
14 cases. Those kind of cases I just didn't defend. But mainly,
15 in addition to the criminal practice, I had a thriving civil
16 practice.

17 MS. PRICE: Okay. And two years into that private
18 practice, you became, really, the city's first Black municipal
19 judge?

20 JUDGE PRICE: Became the first city Black municipal
21 judge. Judge -- Mayor Emory Folmar, who had fought in --
22 military background, had fought in Korea, had been a
23 paratrooper, and he knew I had been a paratrooper in Special
24 Forces, and we would always greet each other along those lines.
25 And he called me one day and said that, you know, I always told

1 you that -- and I don't remember him telling me, but if there
2 was something I thought you'd be interested in, I'll appoint
3 you. And I got a judgeship open down here and see were you
4 interested in it. Well -- I said, well, send me the
5 application. Sent the application. There were nine persons on
6 the city council. He said, I've got you seven votes. He did.
7 I was appointed the first Black municipal judge in -- in the
8 city of Montgomery.

9 MS. PRICE: Okay. Speaking of the military, you never
10 really left --

11 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

12 MS. PRICE: -- the military, did you?

13 JUDGE PRICE: No.

14 MS. PRICE: So you were still a member of the reserves?

15 JUDGE PRICE: Well, once I moved back to Alabama, since
16 I had seven and a half years, I didn't want all that time to be
17 wasted. I rejoined the reserves here in Montgomery, applied for
18 my direct commission in JAG Corps, Judge Advocate General Corps,
19 was commissioned in '76 or '77, first lieutenant. I was called
20 back to active duty as a first lieutenant to defend a National
21 Guard major who the state of Alabama and the military wanted to
22 take his commission before a panel of 12 -- five -- three -- a
23 panel of five, three full colonels and two lieutenant colonels.
24 David Byrne was his civilian lawyer. I was his military lawyer
25 on active duty by Department of Justice -- by Department of

1 Defense. Tried the case for a week, and he was acquitted and we
2 kept his commission, kept him on active duty -- kept him in the
3 reserves.

4 MS. PRICE: When did you ultimately leave the reserves?

5 JUDGE PRICE: In '92.

6 MS. PRICE: Okay.

7 JUDGE PRICE: But basically, what happened, once I was
8 commissioned, I then -- in JAG Corps, and I also had a branch in
9 Quartermaster. So I was deputy commander of units, commander of
10 a couple units, and then I became the SGA for the reserve
11 headquarters of the 375th Field Depot and ended up retiring a
12 lieutenant colonel.

13 MS. PRICE: Okay. When -- fast --

14 JUDGE PRICE: So going from a private to a lieutenant
15 colonel is pretty good.

16 MS. PRICE: That's not bad, is it?

17 JUDGE PRICE: Not bad.

18 MS. PRICE: As we enter the early eighties, then, you
19 have practiced as an attorney for about a decade. Had your
20 thoughts about the law, justice, and fairness changed since law
21 school?

22 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I had -- I saw my role as one who
23 tried to help bring about change. It's no good just to complain
24 and to make statements just to get the press -- get press and
25 get your -- you know, get your name out there. You have to do

1 something to try to bring about the change. And that's why I
2 became a prosecutor. That's why I worked for the Attorney
3 General's Office, to get inside, if you've got an opportunity,
4 see if you can help bring about some changes of what you say
5 you're concerned about.

6 And so, yes, I was -- I had effected some change in
7 Montgomery, had created an atmosphere or a culture of trust now
8 between the community and some aspect of the police department.
9 There had been changes -- some changes in the police department,
10 although we had a big case later that put some damper on that.
11 But yes, that's always my -- has been my philosophy and still my
12 philosophy. If there's something out there that you know is not
13 right and you're in a position to make some sacrifice, if it
14 calls for sacrifice, to make some change to try to bring about
15 reconciliation between people and the system, you should do
16 that.

17 MS. PRICE: So April 4th, 1983.

18 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

19 MS. PRICE: You were appointed to the circuit court by
20 none other than Governor George Wallace.

21 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

22 MS. PRICE: There's a story there.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

24 MS. PRICE: Please share that story.

25 JUDGE PRICE: Well, Governor Wallace was the governor.

1 And, you know, he had been shot and was very ill. In his last
2 race for governor, he met with the Black political leaders,
3 particularly those who worked with Alabama Democratic
4 Conference, some from outside of Alabama. I understand Jesse
5 Jackson was part of the group that went to see him. He called
6 them to come see him and that he had repented or whatever -- you
7 know, was sorry for what -- some of the stuff he had done and if
8 they supported him, he would appoint some registrars, voter
9 registration folks, in the Black Belt counties. And that's what
10 they were really working for. And they supported him and
11 elected him.

12 And he did. He appointed some Black registrars. What
13 happened was his son-in-law, who was married to his oldest
14 daughter, Peggy, Mark Kennedy, who ended up just being a fine
15 judge and a wonderful member of the Supreme Court, was a law
16 clerk. And a position became open at juvenile court and a
17 circuit -- he had become the county judge, and a position became
18 open for a circuit judge in the juvenile court, and he said he
19 wanted that position. And so members of the bar here, including
20 myself, wrote letters and supported him for that position. And
21 Wallace appointed him to that -- to that position.

22 Well, Judge Hooper was in his last term, and he got
23 reelected. And as soon as he got his retirement, he said he was
24 going to retire, but he was not going to retire unless I was
25 appointed, because I was overly qualified for the job. And

1 that's in the newspaper. Now, this is in 1983.

2 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

3 JUDGE PRICE: And then Justice -- later Justice Kennedy
4 said he wanted that position because it was a circuit judge of
5 general jurisdiction. And so we basically told him he couldn't
6 have all the positions.

7 So anyway, the local paper started writing editorials
8 about -- criticizing Wallace about appointing his son --
9 son-in-law and not appointing Price. Now, I don't know whether
10 they were so much concerned about me or they were just critical
11 because his family member was getting all these appointments and
12 Mark Kennedy was his son-in-law.

13 But in any event, that went on for a while. And there
14 was a circuit judge named Sam Taylor who, at one point, had been
15 in the Legislature and was a Wallace floor leader. And he was a
16 circuit judge, but he always said he wanted to be on the court
17 of appeals. So when Judge DeCarlo retired, there was an opening
18 on the court of appeals. They asked him did he want the
19 position; he said no, because he was circuit judge in the
20 courthouse. He enjoyed being circuit judge.

21 To make a long story short, they didn't accept that, so
22 they called him up to the governor's office one Friday morning,
23 offered him the job. He said he didn't want it. Didn't matter.
24 They swore him in anyway. Brought Mark Kennedy up there the
25 same morning and swore him in to Sam Taylor's position. That

1 left Judge Hooper's position open and, a couple weeks later,
2 appointed me circuit judge. That's how that happened.

3 MS. PRICE: There's always a story.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

5 MS. PRICE: There's always a back story. So you were
6 the first African-American on the bench in Montgomery.

7 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. Yes.

8 MS. PRICE: I'm sure that there were a whole lot of
9 emotions --

10 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

11 MS. PRICE: -- a range of emotions about that
12 appointment. Did you feel that you were writing a part of
13 history at that point?

14 JUDGE PRICE: No. I just felt it was another job and
15 another position and I deserved it. And the local bar -- many
16 of the major lawyers in the bar supported that. Okay? So no, I
17 have never felt inferior or not up to the task. It was just
18 another position.

19 MS. PRICE: But surely you felt something, because this
20 was the first time an African-American was now going to be
21 sitting on the bench in what many people call the cradle of the
22 Confederacy in Montgomery, Alabama.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Well, given the opportunity, it was my
24 responsibility to do that, to do that. And it was not done
25 because of the salary, because the salary was not very good at

1 that time.

2 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

3 JUDGE PRICE: And I was -- had a thriving law practice.
4 So to answer your question, it was done out of commitment to
5 help bring about a change.

6 MS. PRICE: Okay. So going into that appointment, did
7 you have a vision or a set of goals regarding your role on the
8 bench?

9 JUDGE PRICE: Well, they had a couple young judges,
10 Judge Thomas and Judge Miller. And I felt that we could -- we
11 could make some amends for some of the bad stuff that happened.

12 MS. PRICE: Okay.

13 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

14 MS. PRICE: So you mentioned Judge Thomas and Judge
15 Miller. How were you received by your colleagues?

16 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, fine. You know, no -- no overtly --
17 no overt rejection.

18 MS. PRICE: Okay. It's been said that you, almost from
19 day one, were really a true lawyer's judge. What does that
20 mean?

21 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I enjoyed being a lawyer. I hoped
22 that every lawyer enjoyed being a lawyer. So I was not the type
23 of judge that once I ascended to the bench, that then I was
24 going to act like I hated lawyers or disliked lawyers. I
25 enjoyed lawyers coming before me representing their clients.

1 And I was always open to help them, always open to accommodate
2 them. That was what they had trained to do. And I was -- I was
3 not going to make it difficult for them -- the law was already
4 difficult for you anyway. You don't need me to be difficult or
5 try to figure out what side of bed I got up on every morning to
6 determine any personality that I was going to have that day.
7 No, that wasn't what you should face. You should be able to
8 come in and do the kind of job that you have been trained to do.
9 And I should be a consummated judge with all that goes with that
10 to accommodate you.

11 MS. PRICE: I understand almost from day one also you
12 emphasized the importance of dress --

13 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

14 MS. PRICE: -- and decorum in the courtroom.

15 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

16 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that.

17 JUDGE PRICE: I believe very strongly in that. I
18 implemented a dress code posted on all the doors in the
19 courthouse. And it basically said that women could not wear
20 spaghetti straps or halter blouses where half of the body,
21 mid-body, is showing, flip-flops, or shorts. Men could not wear
22 tank tops, shorts, and flip-flops and things of that nature.

23 And the reason for that, I truly believe that sometimes
24 people can be adjudged guilty by their appearance. And I didn't
25 want that to happen to anyone, and particularly in my court.

1 And so if I could help you improve your presence, your
2 appearance, I think it was incumbent on me to do it. Plus the
3 respect. It's just a matter of respect.

4 A lot of people you have to -- I learned as municipal
5 judge -- that's where you'll really cut your teeth, in city
6 court, because every Monday morning, you've got the same folks
7 coming with the same ol' crime and all. And you finally realize
8 there are just some people you've got to take care of. And they
9 didn't need to go to jail. And, you know, you're just spending
10 money, wasting money. And particularly those who are going to
11 get drunk and then going to curse at the police, going to go to
12 sleep in some abandoned house, going to urinate on a wall
13 downtown, just those kind of crimes that just keeps you busy.
14 And there were some people that had some mental issues that you
15 just knew that, look, instead of putting them in jail, I've just
16 got to take care of these folks. Okay?

17 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

18 JUDGE PRICE: And so I didn't want people to -- I
19 didn't want anybody convicted because the jury -- and we have
20 a -- you know, we have opinion of folks. We can say we're on
21 jury duty and we can be fair and all that; but, listen, you form
22 an opinion sometimes when the person first walks in and it
23 doesn't leave you.

24 So I just wanted to make sure -- it wasn't the price of
25 the clothes. No, that wasn't what it was about. It was what

1 was the proper dress to come to court, a very serious encounter.
2 One of the places that you would hope, next to church, that you
3 would be treated fairly was the court. And I just didn't want
4 people to -- anyone to be convicted because of dress. Jewelry
5 that -- that just would show too much, I didn't want anybody to
6 be convicted because of that. And it was well received.

7 Now, the law enforcement didn't have to enforce that
8 because that was not their job. The judges had to enforce that.
9 And I had at least half a dozen individuals that -- you don't
10 embarrass them in open court. You call them up, tell their
11 lawyer to come up. You go in the jury room and you tell them,
12 look, you're not dressed appropriate for court. How -- how long
13 would it take you -- where do you live? How long would it take
14 you to go home, put on some long pants or a different shirt?
15 And they'll tell you. And if you didn't think -- since I was
16 from Montgomery and knew about the distance, and, you know, if
17 they were nervous and say, I'll be back in 20 minutes, I know
18 it's going to take you an hour, I said, no, you have an hour.
19 And I'll be here, but you go back and dress appropriately.

20 And I used the old adage or the old common sense saying
21 that I heard that Bear Bryant used to use, the coach of Alabama.
22 And whether it's true or not, he used to -- with difficult
23 players, he would bring their mothers down and put the mothers
24 in the stand, give them a ticket and put them in the stand, and
25 tell them to go play for your mama. Okay? And they usually

1 behaved well and played well. And that's why a lot of these
2 athletes who come from single-family homes look up in the stand
3 and say, I'm playing for my mama, you know.

4 So I would just tell them sometimes, you know, did your
5 mama know you were leaving home dressed like that? They'll say
6 no. Well, go home and -- and change and make your mama proud or
7 something like that. I never had one who rejected or resented
8 it. In fact, they all, in the end, appreciated what I did and
9 thanked -- some teachers wrote, wanted a copy of the order. I
10 got letters from judges in other states wanting orders of the --
11 orders of the -- copies of the order. Yeah.

12 MS. PRICE: Okay.

13 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

14 MS. PRICE: In 33 years, you have tried hundreds,
15 hundreds, of cases, both criminal and civil. We can't possibly
16 cover them or even a significant number of them in this period
17 of time that we have. But let's talk about a few that really
18 stick to your bones. Let's start with death penalty cases.

19 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. Death penalty cases? Yeah.

20 MS. PRICE: How many death penalty cases have you tried
21 or overseen?

22 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I've tried several capital murder
23 cases, which would be death -- death penalty qualified, but I
24 only sentenced three to the death penalty.

25 MS. PRICE: What was your first one?

1 JUDGE PRICE: The first one was -- I believe it was
2 Bui, Quang Bui, who was a Vietnamese who, after Vietnam ended,
3 found his way to America, hard-working fisherman, ended up in
4 San Francisco, New Orleans, Mobile, then Montgomery. And
5 everything about him and everything everybody said about him, he
6 was just a hard-working individual. And he married an American
7 women who, after a period of time, started cheating on him. And
8 he couldn't take it. They had two young girls and -- six, seven
9 years old, in that range. And the wife left him for another
10 man, as I recall. And the point is it was a dysfunctional
11 family. And he then explained that he couldn't stand to have
12 his children reared by someone else or by her, and in his
13 country -- that's what I understand he told law enforcement --
14 take their life and they all meet again in heaven. Whether he
15 called it heaven, I don't know. Anyway, he dressed them up in
16 their finest clothes, laid them on the bed, slit their throats,
17 and they died.

18 MS. PRICE: The daughters?

19 JUDGE PRICE: The daughters. He slit them, and he
20 laid down beside them, maybe to commit suicide. That's what the
21 theory is. And someone came in before he died.

22 We tried that case, and the jury -- you know, in
23 Alabama, it would have to be ten votes in order to sentence
24 somebody to death. It doesn't have to be unanimous. It could
25 be two against, but it must be ten in order to sentence to

1 death. And, you know, it's an advisory opinion from a jury in
2 Alabama. The judge can overrule their opinion -- their verdict
3 on the sentence. And I sentenced him to death and -- because I
4 think the case deserved death.

5 MS. PRICE: Did the jury advise death?

6 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. Yes.

7 MS. PRICE: Okay.

8 JUDGE PRICE: I think it may have been unanimous. But
9 anyway, and it deserved death, okay, although you sympathize
10 with him and understand the cultural difference and all of that.
11 And I authorized the lawyers to go to Vietnam to prepare for the
12 case and, you know, the sentencing phase to -- all about his
13 background and all of that. So -- to make sure he got a fair
14 trial. And the case was affirmed by all appellate courts in
15 Alabama. As I recall, it was affirmed by the United States
16 Supreme Court and cited in a couple cases.

17 And, of course, the lawyers then, on habeas corpus,
18 ended up in federal court. And the federal judge set it aside
19 under what's called *Batson*. *Batson* was a case -- *Batson versus*
20 *Kentucky* -- that raised the question of jury qualification and
21 violation of the Constitution to strike minority jurors, when it
22 happened, unless it's just race-neutral. And the federal court
23 found that that had not been done in that case, although I think
24 it had. But reversed the case, and we had to retry him. And
25 that jury, on retrial -- I think we retried him or he pled --

1 recommended a life sentence. And that's -- he's serving it now,
2 life without parole. He's still alive.

3 MS. PRICE: He's still alive?

4 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

5 MS. PRICE: Okay.

6 JUDGE PRICE: Another one was Raymond Brown that had
7 killed three of his family members in North Alabama, killed his
8 grandmother, his wife, and his aunt. Brutal killings. And he
9 was sentenced to life in the penitentiary before the death
10 penalty with killing more than one person was enacted. And he
11 had served quite a few years. And as long as he was in the
12 penitentiary under male supervision, there was just absolutely
13 no problem. I mean, just as docile and everything. And he was
14 paroled and attempted to kill a lady and strangle a lady in
15 Atmore. Okay? He didn't kill her. But his parole was not
16 revoked, and he ended up in Montgomery dating a lady out here in
17 North Montgomery. And over a card game they were playing -- I
18 don't recall all the facts, but ended up killing her in the same
19 way he killed his family members, with a knife, and left it
20 embedded in her stomach.

21 He -- I sentenced him to death. I talked about that
22 case in -- at a seminar at Yale, Yale Law School. But anyway,
23 he died before -- before he was executed.

24 The third one, that the person was executed, was Torrey
25 McNabb. Torrey McNabb was a young Black male that stole a car

1 and had an accident over on Cleveland Avenue in front of Beulah
2 Church. Police Officer Anderson was on lunch break and had been
3 to see his mother. And he was type -- the type of police
4 officer that if you're talking about one who worked in the
5 community and had respect of the community, he was one of those
6 types. And he came upon the accident because it was not far
7 from his mother's house and the route he had to travel. And the
8 only thing he did was got out of his car to start investigating
9 the accident, and Torrey McNabb just started shooting and killed
10 him. And just a horrible crime. Tried it, and he was
11 convicted. And I sentenced him to death, and he was executed.

12 MS. PRICE: Sometimes it must be hard to have faith in
13 humanity when you try cases and you hear about some of the
14 heinous acts that people commit against one another.

15 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. Well, you know, I -- I believe
16 the death penalty is appropriate in some situations. And I've
17 seen cases so hideous, so atrocious, so depraved until there's
18 no explanation I can come up with why society should keep them
19 alive. I'm pro-life, but I -- life is sacred to me, and the
20 sanctity of life is important. But there are some crimes that
21 people commit that I can justify -- which I have and don't
22 apologize for it -- sentence a person to death. Now, I don't --
23 I wouldn't go around bragging about it. I don't, you know, go
24 around -- I'm not gleeful about it.

25 MS. PRICE: No.

1 JUDGE PRICE: But that's what you have to do.

2 MS. PRICE: You can make that decision.

3 JUDGE PRICE: I can make that decision.

4 MS. PRICE: Tell us about Todd Road.

5 JUDGE PRICE: Well, shortly after I was appointed to
6 the bench in '83, Todd Road was out in North Montgomery, was a
7 major case here in Montgomery that still -- shock waves from it
8 still reverberate throughout the community.

9 It was a poor neighborhood. And a lady died, and her
10 children and family members were up north in Chicago, Detroit,
11 Cleveland, maybe some other states, and they came for the
12 funeral. And after the funeral, getting ready -- before they --
13 getting ready to leave to go back, they all drove and had what
14 you call large cars, Cadillacs and Lincolns and those large
15 cars. And somebody tipped off the police, who were in plain
16 clothes, two of them, Spivey and I forgot the other person's
17 name, in plain clothes and a plain police car, that all these
18 cars were at this house on Todd Road in Madison Park and
19 something amiss or something nefarious or criminal had to be
20 going on because -- it had to be a dope deal or something. They
21 didn't know the person had died.

22 So Spivey and his partner drove by the house. And as
23 they were driving by the house, a young Black male was coming
24 out of the house to go to one of the cars. They stopped and
25 called him to talk to him to find out what's going on. He

1 started running, went back in the house. They got out of the
2 car and chased him in the house. And a fight ensued and all,
3 and ultimately was shot and one other person was shot. And they
4 charged all these people with -- with criminal cases. And they
5 hadn't done anything. I mean, you know, I mean, they're just
6 there at the house.

7 And I had just been appointed to the bench I guess
8 about four or five months -- about three or four months. And
9 the case was tried, and all these visitors were indicted. And
10 representing these visitors was Attorney Solomon Seay; retired
11 U.S. Magistrate Judge Vanzetta McPherson; Johnny Hardwick, who
12 is circuit judge now; and Troy Massey.

13 And Randall Thomas was a young judge right across the
14 hall from me, Jimmy Evans was the prosecutor, and I'm over in my
15 office right across the hall. And while I was not directly
16 involved in the case because the case was assign to Thomas, the
17 truth of the matter was I was directly because Jimmy Evans, as
18 they would discuss across the hall, would come over to my office
19 and get my opinion, discuss it with me.

20 And it -- it just -- it was a terrible situation. And
21 it finally worked out where -- the settlement was -- and I don't
22 think defense lawyers really -- really wanted to accept it, but
23 the settlement was one or two of the visitors would pay a fine
24 and plead to a misdemeanor, and the rest of them go home. And
25 that's what happened. But that case still reverberates

1 throughout the community now. When you say Todd Road, they
2 remember how terrible that was. Yes.

3 MS. PRICE: And they remember it because of police
4 taking action --

5 JUDGE PRICE: Taking action --

6 MS. PRICE: Okay.

7 JUDGE PRICE: -- when the people were innocent and just
8 assuming, because Cadillacs and Lincolns and whatever were
9 parked there, something is going on. And you have no probable
10 cause because you have no information that anything -- dope or
11 anything else is going on.

12 MS. PRICE: Wow. Well into your second decade on the
13 bench, you had one of the most high profile cases of your career
14 that grabbed the attention of the country.

15 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

16 MS. PRICE: This case dealt with the display of the Ten
17 Commandments in a courtroom and opening court with prayer.

18 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

19 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that case.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Judge Roy Moore, who was a circuit judge
21 in Etowah County, he had been assistant DA, West Point graduate,
22 had fought in Vietnam, had been assistant district attorney, had
23 run for district attorney, was defeated, but some way he had
24 either got appointed circuit judge or he had won the position as
25 circuit judge. Well, he had hand-carved plaques of the Ten

1 Commandments. Okay? And he was opening court -- after jurors
2 would come in, the pool would come in, he was opening court with
3 a prayer. And what he was doing, he was using the same two
4 Baptist preachers, I believe, who were friends of his, to do the
5 prayer.

6 Well, two women who worked in the clerk's office and
7 members of the Freethought Society filed a lawsuit against Judge
8 Moore -- and he had placed a copy of the Ten Commandments on the
9 wall of the jury box in the courtroom. And two women worked in
10 the clerk's office and a member of the Freethought Society filed
11 a lawsuit against him. And it was in federal court, Judge
12 Probst, I think. And ACLU represented them. And Judge Probst
13 dismissed the case on the ground that these individuals had no
14 standing to file the lawsuit because they were not summoned to
15 jury duty, they didn't have to go up to the courtroom, and they
16 were not, by compulsion, by subpoena, to be there. And
17 that's -- and that's true.

18 And so Judge Moore, who wanted to keep this going, said
19 no, you know, we got to get some results. So he came to
20 Montgomery and got Governor Fob James and Jeff Sessions, who was
21 Attorney General, to file the lawsuit for declaratory judgment.
22 The question was whether or not what he had done, was doing, was
23 constitutional. And the mistake they made, they list Judge
24 Moore as one of the defendants. Okay?

25 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

1 JUDGE PRICE: So the case was assigned to me. And I
2 had a hearing on the case. A lawyer from Wyoming from an
3 organization called The Call Society came all the way from
4 Wyoming to defend Judge Moore. Judge Moore and his law clerk,
5 who had written a book called God and John Jay Treaty or what
6 have you, would defend Judge Moore. They went up to that
7 Harvard -- and they spent lot of money. They got Harvard to
8 replicate and copy all the volumes of Blackstone. Okay? And
9 they brought them down here.

10 And so, you know, I could tell when something's done
11 for publicity and when you're serious about what you're doing.
12 If you're going to introduce the whole volumes of Blackstone --
13 so I want to know what part of Blackstone you want me to read.
14 And so I asked them that, what part you want me to read? I want
15 you to read the whole thing. Well, the whole volume of
16 Blackstone had nothing to do with this case. But anyway, you
17 listen to that.

18 And so I had the hearing. They had a demonstration
19 around the courthouse. And people came from Etowah County,
20 school kids, and surrounded -- and threats on me and my life.
21 And I had security at my home and -- I believe you were there at
22 the time. Were you there?

23 MS. PRICE: No.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Okay.

25 MS. PRICE: Actually, I was told -- I was in Seattle,

1 and I was told not to come home because of the death threats.

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Right. Well, anyway, I had -- for
3 about two weeks, I had security 24 hours a day. And my wife
4 would go to the store and all; she had to have security.

5 But, you know, I had the hearing, listened to what they
6 were saying, and I wrote an order that he had to cease and
7 desist from opening court with a prayer. Before he opened
8 court, he could have church in the courthouse if he wanted to.
9 Okay? And I think I put that in the order. I mean, he could --
10 do what you want to. But once you open court and everybody in
11 the courtroom now is there by subpoena and they have no -- they
12 can't just get up and leave, it's a violation of the
13 Constitution. Okay?

14 On the Ten Commandments, I -- I ducked out, to be
15 honest with you. I wrote an order that it appeared that he had
16 displayed the Ten Commandments plaque in a constitutional way
17 because there was a picture on the other wall over there of
18 some -- George Washington, for example, George Washington
19 Crossing the Delaware. And the law is you can display the Ten
20 Commandments in a government building if you display it with
21 other constitutional and educational documents.

22 MS. PRICE: Historical documents.

23 JUDGE PRICE: Historical documents.

24 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

25 JUDGE PRICE: So, you know, I didn't want to tell --

1 say that he couldn't do the commandments, so I ducked out. And
2 Judge Moore said, no, Judge Price -- and I said was not
3 promoting religion. Moore had a press conference in Birmingham
4 and said Judge Price is absolutely wrong. I am promoting
5 religion, and they are not up there with other historical
6 documents.

7 So I said, well, maybe I need to go over there and see.
8 So I got the sheriff to authorize a deputy to carry me to Etowah
9 County. The sheriff of Etowah County had a deputy meet us at
10 the county line and escort me on to the courthouse. And in the
11 hallway of the courthouse there were people singing and
12 threatening me and all of that of destroying the Ten
13 Commandments. How are you going to destroy the Ten
14 Commandments? They're handed down by God.

15 But anyway, so I met with Judge Stewart, the presiding
16 judge, Judge Ray, and other judges in the courthouse. And I
17 told them, I said, look, get Judge Moore to put the Declaration
18 of Independence, a copy of the Constitution on each side of the
19 Ten Commandments, and I'll go on back to Montgomery. And say --
20 they say, no, he not going do it. This is an issue that he
21 going to run for -- on, and he not going to do it. And in the
22 courtroom where the jury box was -- a small courtroom in Etowah
23 County, and the Ten Commandments sort of protruded out on you.
24 So I said, well, he not going to do it. So I came on back and
25 said, well, you know, I've got to do my duty now.

1 So I sat there and mulled over what -- you know, how to
2 write this order. And I thought about Judge Frank M. Johnson,
3 who desegregated the whole South and was barred from entering
4 First Baptist Church over here and never went back to church
5 over there because a deacon stood in the door and barred him
6 from coming, and his home was bombed and all, but yet he was
7 committed to the Constitution and doing his job.

8 And I thought about Dr. King, all that he was going
9 through and the threats on his life and the sacrifice he was
10 making. Why in the world should I duck out on writing the order
11 that -- that I know is right? So I wrote an order, one-page
12 order, that Judge Moore -- all he had to do -- it could be done
13 in 30 seconds -- was to display other historical documents
14 around the Ten Commandments and they can stay; otherwise, he
15 would have to remove them, if not, be held in contempt of court.
16 That is what the law says. Okay?

17 Now, he appealed, and the court of appeals -- Supreme
18 Court dismissed the appeal because -- on a technicality because
19 what they said was there was no controversy between the parties,
20 because Judge Moore came and got Fob James -- Governor James and
21 Attorney General Sessions to file the lawsuit, and he is a party
22 to the lawsuit, but he's listed as a defendant. So since you
23 have come and participated in filing this, where is the
24 controversy between y'all? Okay? So that's how the case was --
25 the appeal was dismissed.

1 That's when Moore later got elected to the -- to the
2 Supreme Court, put his monument up there, and Judge Thompson
3 here ordered that it be removed. And who was the prosecutor in
4 removing him from the bench? Bill Pryor, who is now the
5 presiding judge of the Eleventh Circuit, who defended him in my
6 case and sat in my office and said, I know it's against the law,
7 but I've got to do what I've got to do. So I'm just saying
8 that's what happened. And, you know, so nobody was trying to
9 keep Judge Moore from, you know, recognizing God and practicing
10 religion. That was never the case.

11 MS. PRICE: So then shortly after your ruling, you were
12 in the middle of a trial.

13 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

14 MS. PRICE: And you received a phone call from Boston.

15 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

16 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that.

17 JUDGE PRICE: I was presiding in the tobacco case, the
18 litigation. And I was on the bench, and I received a call from
19 Boston. My secretary came in to get me and told me that
20 Caroline Kennedy's secretary was on the phone, can I come in and
21 take the call. I said yes. I went in and talked to her, and
22 she told me that Ms. Kennedy would like to speak to me and would
23 I be available to accept the call. And I sort of didn't want to
24 show how giddy I was, and so I said, yes, I'll be happy to
25 accept the call anytime she call.

1 About 45 minutes later, Caroline -- my secretary came
2 in and told me Caroline Kennedy was on the phone, and I went in
3 and accepted the call. And Ms. Kennedy said, Judge, I'm
4 calling, pleased to tell you that you are the -- the
5 recipient -- 1997 recipient of the Profile in Courage Award.
6 And I was so elated, and I almost was speechless. And I told
7 her thank you. And she wanted to know would I -- could I come
8 to Boston to receive the award, and I assured her I could. And
9 that was what happened.

10 I went back on the bench, and I was so happy about it,
11 I called a recess and called several of the lawyers who
12 practiced in Montgomery and I knew very well to the bench in a
13 sidebar and told them I had just gotten notice that I was the
14 recipient of the 1997 Profile in Courage Award. One of them
15 went out and had a press conference and announced it.

16 MS. PRICE: Announced your news.

17 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Announced my news, which I was
18 supposed to keep secret and allow the library in Boston to give
19 the news. And he put it out there before they did.

20 MS. PRICE: Well, sometimes those things happen.

21 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. Sure. I mean --

22 MS. PRICE: So tell us, what exactly is the Profile in
23 Courage Award?

24 JUDGE PRICE: Well, first of all, I didn't know that it
25 existed. A friend of mine, John Yung, who was also in the

1 Attorney General's Office with me and we continued to be friends
2 afterwards, knew about the Profile in Courage Award. During the
3 Roy Moore Ten Commandments case, he was sending clippings,
4 newspaper clippings and articles, to the foundation about the
5 case. And I understand the committee took great interest in the
6 case because it was controversial in this area and expanded
7 beyond this area.

8 And I understand that members of the committee became
9 interested in knowing more about the case, and some on the
10 committee called individuals in the state of Alabama. I
11 understand Senator Kennedy, Ted Kennedy, called Chief Justice
12 Heflin. I understand someone on the committee called Morris
13 Dees and called someone in Mobile, et cetera, and they told them
14 that John Seigenthaler called someone he knew in Alabama. And I
15 understand they were told that this case was newsworthy all over
16 the country and it was very controversial.

17 And that's when they started concentrating on who to --
18 who to award the Profile in Courage Award to in 1997,
19 understanding that they were leaning toward or had made a
20 decision to award it to John Lewis for his work in civil rights.
21 They changed that, awarded me the award in '97, and about two
22 years later awarded John Lewis for a lifetime achievement award.

23 MS. PRICE: So who typically is the recipient of this
24 award?

25 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. You have to be an elected official,

1 elected official that deals with an issue that -- of some
2 consequence to society that will cause you, as the elected
3 official -- could cause you to lose an election. And you have
4 to show courage to withstand the pressure, the fear of losing,
5 and do the right thing and withstand the pressure and the fear
6 of losing your position. And they make an assessment, the
7 committee does, and then decide who to give the award to.

8 MS. PRICE: I think I remember hearing the committee
9 was particularly impressed with the volume of threats --

10 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

11 MS. PRICE: -- of hate mail --

12 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

13 MS. PRICE: -- you know, the levels to which the
14 Alabama Bureau of Investigation had to go and protect --

15 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

16 MS. PRICE: -- your family because there were so many
17 credible threats.

18 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

19 MS. PRICE: And it extended all the way to me in
20 Seattle, because I was told not to come home during that period.

21 JUDGE PRICE: Well, basically, it was the sheriff's
22 department and local police department.

23 MS. PRICE: Yeah. Yeah. So the threat was real.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, the threat was very real. Like I
25 said previously, I had security 24 hours a day around my house.

1 And wherever we would go, we had security to escort us and to be
2 with us. And it was very serious, and I took it very serious.
3 I may have put on the -- the appearance of being very brave, but
4 I was concerned about my family.

5 MS. PRICE: So up in Boston, you were awarded this
6 lantern --

7 JUDGE PRICE: This lantern.

8 MS. PRICE: -- which is a symbol of the Profile in
9 Courage Award.

10 JUDGE PRICE: That is the lantern.

11 MS. PRICE: And so I will read this for you. Profile
12 in Courage Award presented to Judge Charles Price in recognition
13 of his distinguished public service and the example he has set
14 of political courage in American public life.

15 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

16 MS. PRICE: What does this -- what does this lantern
17 mean?

18 JUDGE PRICE: I understand that it was designed by
19 Caroline Kennedy's husband, who is an architect. And as I -- in
20 discussion with him at the ceremony and other members of the
21 Kennedy family, it's a beacon of hope. It's a light to the
22 world and it is to give people hope in a better society and that
23 they can believe that the world is not as dark as it appears and
24 there will be better times to come.

25 MS. PRICE: Right. Every time I come over to your

1 house, I love looking at it as it catches the light in -- in
2 your living room.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

4 MS. PRICE: So you came back from Boston.

5 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

6 MS. PRICE: But you were still in the middle of some
7 tobacco litigation.

8 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

9 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that.

10 JUDGE PRICE: Well, the tobacco litigation was a
11 class-action lawsuit suing the major tobacco manufacturers in
12 this country, primarily out of -- located in Virginia; lawyers
13 from all over the country, the better trial lawyers from the
14 state of Alabama; and it was a very complex case. And it ended
15 up being a case that was settled, and the tobacco companies paid
16 quite a bit of money -- I believe it's still being collected at
17 this time. And not only Alabama -- not only state of Alabama
18 shared in the -- in the refund or the money that was paid, but
19 other states did too. And it was a very satisfying case to get
20 the refunds made to the public for health reasons.

21 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

22 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah.

23 MS. PRICE: Also, a little bit later in your career,
24 you oversaw pharmaceutical litigation.

25 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. That was the case where the major

1 pharmaceutical companies were sued, several of them, Merck,
2 AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and maybe a couple smaller
3 ones -- were sued in Alabama, in Montgomery, class action:
4 false advertisement, puffing up the products, controlling the
5 price on the products, and really dumping medicine on the public
6 that was not really suitable for what they claimed it was, as I
7 recall. But mainly, it was false advertisement.

8 MS. PRICE: So how long did that litigation last?

9 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, that litigation lasted two or three
10 weeks. And the jury returned a verdict about \$126 million, I
11 believe; and, of course, the Supreme Court reversed it, Alabama
12 Supreme Court.

13 MS. PRICE: So in favor of the plaintiffs.

14 JUDGE PRICE: Yeah. In favor of the plaintiff. But
15 the Supreme Court of Alabama reversed the case.

16 MS. PRICE: And lawyers from all over the country were
17 there representing --

18 JUDGE PRICE: New York. Primarily New York, New
19 Jersey, then, of course, Birmingham, the better lawyers from
20 state of -- trial lawyers from state of Alabama, yes.

21 And my mentor, Bill Baxley, was in that case also.

22 MS. PRICE: Oh, he tried the case as well?

23 JUDGE PRICE: He was part of it.

24 MS. PRICE: On plaintiff's side?

25 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

1 MS. PRICE: Okay. I'm going to tell you a story. A
2 very good friend of mine who is a partner at one of the most
3 prestigious firms in Alabama shared a story about you a couple
4 years ago. A mother had sued a school district for disciplining
5 her child without a paddle -- I'm sorry -- with a paddle. In
6 fact, she had been through several attorneys, firing every
7 single one of them for one issue or another. The school
8 attorney had tried several times to reach out to the plaintiff
9 in an attempt to resolve the matter, but the mother was pretty
10 obstinate.

11 The matter came before you for a hearing. And I'm told
12 that you quickly sized up the tension in the room between the
13 parties and saw a little bit of the theatrics of the mother. So
14 when you addressed the parties, you said, this Court finds that
15 the child is in need of a guardian. My attorney friend happened
16 to be there in the courtroom on a completely different matter.
17 But right there on the spot -- and much to his surprise -- you
18 reached out and appointed him as the child's guardian. You then
19 told the attorneys they needed to get together and talk about
20 resolving this matter, which they did, and the case was settled.

21 My friend's take on this is that you were concerned
22 that the mother was not acting entirely in the best interests of
23 the child. What you did was set in place a process designed to
24 get the child some kind of benefit, which is exactly what
25 happened in the end.

1 My friend went on to say that there are -- he's been in
2 your courtroom lots of times, and there are several stories
3 about you along this vein. He said to me that you always knew
4 how to move a case along, that you have this amazing ability to
5 cut to the chase and get to the heart of the matter and then get
6 lawyers focused on that. You never disrespected a lawyer, nor
7 did you cotton to playing any kind of games. It's not always
8 about going to trial, is it?

9 JUDGE PRICE: No, it's not. It's about the resolution
10 of the case. If justice can be found and -- and put in place
11 short of going to trial -- the whole question is to find what is
12 just, what is fair. And I don't know the name of your -- your
13 name of your friend, but --

14 MS. PRICE: I'm not going to tell you.

15 JUDGE PRICE: I understand. But I had to have a great
16 deal of respect for him. And he had to have proven over a
17 period of time that he was highly competent, effective, and
18 cared about his clients, whoever he represented. And I was very
19 pleased that he told you that, and I was very pleased that the
20 case was settled and it was a resolution of the issues and that
21 the child benefited from the resolution.

22 MS. PRICE: Another friend told me that she desperately
23 wanted to help her young nephew, who had been convicted of a
24 crime. And you had learned about her concern because of a
25 letter that she had written to the court. On the morning of the

1 sentencing, none of his family members were present, and you
2 realized that the aunt was not aware of the sentencing date. So
3 what you did is you postponed sentencing for a few hours; you
4 had your secretary contact the aunt and request her presence in
5 the courtroom. She complied, and she was present for the
6 sentencing.

7 Why was it so important for to you have her present?

8 JUDGE PRICE: Well, even -- even though the defendant
9 had either pled guilty or found guilty and I was going to
10 sentence him, but I think in all circumstances it's important to
11 have someone support you, and a family member particularly, to
12 show that they're still concerned about you. I think that's
13 part of rehabilitation to know there's still someone out there
14 that care about me, concerned about me, and will come and assist
15 me in the darkest days of my life, and particularly at an early
16 age like that. And I just think -- and thought -- it was
17 important that since she had written me about this particular
18 person, that it was only fair that -- no other family member
19 showed up and I knew how to contact her, that I contacted her.
20 And I think it was for his benefit to know that somebody in his
21 family, even during that dark time, cared for him. And I
22 believe that would help put him on a road toward rehabilitation.

23 MS. PRICE: Well, apparently it did.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Okay.

25 MS. PRICE: He went to prison for several years and he

1 got out. And still, to this day, he remembers that his aunt was
2 there --

3 JUDGE PRICE: Good.

4 MS. PRICE: -- during the sentencing. And she tells me
5 that he had a couple of missteps once he was out, but for
6 several years now, he has been a very active and contributing
7 member of society.

8 JUDGE PRICE: Well, that's very good to know. Very
9 good to know.

10 MS. PRICE: The opioid cases.

11 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

12 MS. PRICE: Tell me about those.

13 JUDGE PRICE: That's going on now, that is in
14 litigation now? Well, I served as -- of counsel to the City of
15 Montgomery in my law practice in the opioid case that I hope
16 will come to fruition in the very near future. And that case is
17 in federal court in Ohio, and I'm working on behalf of the City
18 of Montgomery but with the law firm that represents all the
19 plaintiffs, the Beasley Allen law firm in Montgomery, in making
20 sure that Montgomery get its fair share of any funds that --
21 providing we receive funds -- to help pay the costs of all the
22 health care that Montgomery has spent as a result of the dumping
23 of opioids in this city and on its citizens.

24 MS. PRICE: Going back to 1999, you were unanimously
25 elected presiding judge. That is mostly an administrative

1 position, but it comes with a lot of power to direct the
2 operations of the courthouse. What kind of changes did you make
3 during your administration?

4 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes. I -- I used my position as
5 presiding judge to make sure that when I left, there would be
6 something that I leave, an improvement in the administration of
7 the courthouse, the justice system, that was not there when I
8 came as -- came on as circuit judge and before I -- before I was
9 an elected circuit judge.

10 So during my tenure as circuit judge, with the power I
11 had, I got the county commission to approve an authority to
12 operate a community correction program that is still in
13 existence at this time, going well, helping keep people -- keep
14 defendants -- offenders out of the penitentiary, also helping
15 nonviolent offenders who are in the penitentiary near the term
16 of being released to be released early and be put into the
17 community corrections system. They can be supervised as well in
18 the community as in the penitentiary. Help them find jobs. If
19 they had drug problems and have received drug treatment in the
20 penitentiary, to get them involved in after-treatment programs
21 in the community.

22 And it's going extremely well. It has a staff -- very
23 professional staff. The -- the authority has seven members on
24 the authority that oversee the program, and I'm very proud of
25 it.

1 MS. PRICE: Great. You also established a drug court
2 during that time.

3 JUDGE PRICE: Drug court. Drug court. Drug court is a
4 very popular court throughout the whole judicial system now
5 because there are so many offenders come through with drug
6 problems. And the purpose is to try to help individuals recover
7 from drug -- drug problem they have.

8 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

9 JUDGE PRICE: And Judge McCooey, who was a circuit
10 judge at the time, and I put the program together. It's still
11 going extremely well now. That's been over 20 years. And it's
12 growing in numbers, and I think the judges there still accept
13 and know the importance of that program. And I'm proud to know
14 that many individuals have gone and finished that program, had
15 their cases dismissed, and are well on their way to being
16 productive citizens.

17 MS. PRICE: Is that similar to the restorative justice
18 program?

19 JUDGE PRICE: No. Restorative justice is a program
20 that really was very popular on Indian reservations but also is
21 being practiced and used throughout the court system in many
22 states now, and we instituted it in Montgomery.

23 And what it -- the way it works is that sometimes the
24 victims just need to talk to the person who has committed a
25 crime against them to help find closure, to help find why.

1 Sometimes the offender just needs to talk to the victim to purge
2 their guilt. You bring the two together and let them face each
3 other. The victim, first of all, has to agree to do this. And
4 let them talk to each other, find out what motivated the
5 perpetrator to commit the crime, the suffering that the victim
6 is enduring and, of course, then, out of that, take into
7 consideration the victim's recommendation on sentencing.

8 Don't have to sentence them to exactly what the victims
9 say, but surely take into consideration. And that's a program
10 that's usually in nonviolent crimes. And, of course, it could
11 be used in violent crimes also. And I think it has been used in
12 a couple -- some violent crimes that family members have been
13 killed, family members have been assaulted, things of that
14 nature.

15 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

16 JUDGE PRICE: But it's a program that enjoys the
17 support of a large segment of the community.

18 MS. PRICE: You also, during that time period,
19 established the Public Defenders Office.

20 JUDGE PRICE: Oh, yes.

21 MS. PRICE: Tell us about that.

22 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. I was high on that. I just
23 wanted -- prior to my establishing the Public Defenders Office,
24 lawyers -- clients were represented by court-appointed lawyers,
25 and we had a system where we could contract with lawyers to

1 represent defendants.

2 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

3 JUDGE PRICE: And that lawyer would be assigned to the
4 particular judge. Well, I just think that is not a very good
5 system because if you -- if the judge signed the contract for
6 the lawyer to represent defendants, a lawyer is not going to
7 ever challenge the judge or very seldom would challenge the
8 judge on some matter that may be beneficial to his client.

9 And so I -- I support the contract process, but I think
10 in major cases, there needs to be an independent lawyer --
11 independent from the judge, independent from the Court -- that
12 solely interested in representing the client. And I was able to
13 get the county commission to designate a building right next
14 door to the courthouse, able to get the state Indigent Defense
15 Fund to assist in establishing the Montgomery County Public
16 Defenders Office, hired a young lady who had been in the
17 District Attorney's Office and had also practiced in federal
18 court to be the director of the Public Defenders Office. And
19 there's a turnover of lawyers periodically, as you would expect;
20 but I understand the Public Defenders Office and the lawyers
21 over there are getting good training and doing a very good job.

22 I'm really proud of that. And it's -- we keep working
23 to get the same number of lawyers in the Public Defenders Office
24 and the District Attorney's Office, same number of
25 investigators, counselors in the Public Defenders Office as the

1 number is in the District Attorney's Office. And so that's
2 working well, and I'm very proud of it.

3 MS. PRICE: That's excellent. In 2003, you became
4 president of the Alabama Circuit Judges Association --

5 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

6 MS. PRICE: -- an association comprised of your peers,
7 who, I might add, were mostly white.

8 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

9 MS. PRICE: How did you feel being elected by your
10 peers from across the state?

11 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I felt fine. I felt very good
12 because I had established a record as a very competent, fair
13 judge. And I -- I never -- in every job I've ever had --
14 position I've ever had, I never felt less than equal to others.
15 And so I accept it as a natural occurrence that over a period of
16 years, observing my work, observing my work with the
17 association, observing me as a person and as a judge -- and if
18 they decide to elect me the presiding judge -- president of the
19 Circuit Judges Association, I would take it and make it work to
20 try to better the criminal justice system, which we did.

21 MS. PRICE: In 2006, you were awarded the Wiley Branton
22 Award from the National Bar Association, named for the former
23 dean of Howard Law School --

24 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

25 MS. PRICE: -- who was also the attorney who

1 represented the black students who integrated Central High --

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

3 MS. PRICE: -- in Little Rock, Arkansas.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

5 MS. PRICE: How did it feel receiving that award?

6 JUDGE PRICE: I felt great about it. The National Bar
7 Association, the judicial council of the National Bar
8 Association, made that award. And that award was in recognition
9 of my doing seminars, leading discussions, and always
10 encouraging judges to be the best they could be and helping put
11 together the educational programs for the judicial council. And
12 that's what Attorney Branton was known for, and I was very
13 honored to receive that award.

14 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh. You also worked with famed trial
15 attorney Gerry Spence --

16 JUDGE PRICE: Yes.

17 MS. PRICE: -- to establish the Gerry Spence
18 Thunderbird Judicial College in Wyoming.

19 JUDGE PRICE: Right. Right.

20 MS. PRICE: How did all of that come about?

21 JUDGE PRICE: Well, Gerry Spence is a very famous trial
22 lawyer in the Midwest, although he has tried cases on the East
23 Coast and been very successful. His reputation is as district
24 attorney, he never lost a case. And he would say he never lost
25 a case as a defense attorney, and I have reason to believe that

1 is true.

2 And he has a system set up where lawyers will go out,
3 spend a week or two weeks, sometimes three, among themselves
4 training each other in trial tactics and things of that nature.
5 And one of the lawyers that was on the staff was Morris Dees,
6 and he came to see me and suggested that maybe I should -- he
7 would like to see me go out to Wyoming and participate in the
8 discussions going on, since I had tried major cases and
9 long-time experience. I did. I went out three times and helped
10 set up the Thunderbird Judicial College.

11 Great experience. Wonderful experience, indispensable
12 with understanding the full breadth of the judicial system.

13 MS. PRICE: In May 2009, yet another milestone, the
14 Phelps-Price Justice Center. Share with us the story behind the
15 naming of the building.

16 JUDGE PRICE: Well, we -- Judge Phelps participated in
17 visiting other courthouses in the country when we started to
18 build and there was a decision to build a new courthouse, the
19 courthouse that's named after Phelps-Price.

20 I did a lot of talking with the architects. And I had
21 been to a couple of cities, one I remember in Savannah, Georgia,
22 and had seen their courthouse and had the name of the county
23 courthouse, in the name of one of the judges I assume they were
24 honoring at the time. And I came back, and our courthouse was
25 simply Montgomery County Courthouse. And I thought we needed to

1 add a little more about what the courthouse was about. It was a
2 place that really stood for justice.

3 And Judge Phelps, in my opinion, in years during that
4 time, led a lot of innovation of programs and plans around the
5 courthouse. First of all, he started bringing minority students
6 from Alabama State, primarily, to the courthouse to do
7 internships. We hired a couple -- he and I would talk. We
8 hired a couple students to work in the -- in the community
9 correction program. And I thought that he had demonstrated
10 enough concern about the justice system that if we were going to
11 name the courthouse, that he would be honored in that regard.

12 I approached the county commission about naming the
13 courthouse. The conversation came up with a couple of them
14 about, well, I had done so much around the courthouse. I was
15 the presiding judge implementing these different programs. So
16 in honor of my service, I should be added to the courthouse --
17 the name of the courthouse. So the county commission
18 unanimously approved the resolution that the courthouse
19 henceforth would be named Montgomery County Courthouse,
20 Phelps-Price Justice Center. And that is a culmination of my
21 work. I'm proud of it. I'm -- I'm just proud of it.

22 MS. PRICE: Uh-huh. Judge, we're going to move to
23 Chapter 4, which is the judge's summation.

24 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

25 CHAPTER FOUR: THE JUDGE'S SUMMATION

1 MS. PRICE: Thirty-three years.

2 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

3 MS. PRICE: Hundreds of cases.

4 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

5 MS. PRICE: And we have barely scratched the surface of
6 those.

7 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

8 MS. PRICE: Never opposed in an election --

9 JUDGE PRICE: Right.

10 MS. PRICE: -- in Montgomery, Alabama.

11 JUDGE PRICE: Uh-huh.

12 MS. PRICE: These facts say something about you as a
13 judge and how the community felt about you. What has been --
14 what has being a judge meant to you?

15 JUDGE PRICE: It's given me the opportunity to not just
16 complain about the criminal justice system, what's wrong with
17 the criminal justice system, how unfair the criminal justice
18 system may be and all of the warts that it has -- instead of
19 just complaining, to be in a position to help make some changes.
20 And I'm convinced that the work I have done not only has changed
21 the criminal justice system in Montgomery but throughout the
22 whole state of Alabama. And judges have called me from other
23 states, other jurisdictions, to implement many of the programs
24 that I helped establish here in Montgomery.

25 I just feel that it was a calling for me to obtain the

1 position. I've had great support in what I've done from my
2 family, from my wife, who has been indispensable to my success
3 and accomplishment. And I hold what I have done in the highest
4 regard and esteem. And I'm proud of it.

5 MS. PRICE: I asked you this question a little while
6 ago, and I'm going to ask it again. How, if at all, did your
7 opinion about justice, the legal system, fairness, change or
8 evolve over the years when you were a judge?

9 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I think what happened, as you grow
10 in the position, you realize that there are some things you can
11 do yourself. And instead of looking to others and criticizing
12 what they are not doing, you are the day. So you just get in
13 there with the courage, with the backbone to figure out what you
14 think is correct -- is wrong that needs to be corrected and make
15 the move toward correcting what you consider the improvement
16 needs to be instead of just complaining about it.

17 And I'm just proud of 33 years, in addition to my law
18 practice and just being in the legal profession, that I have had
19 the courage and the will and the strength to speak on subjects
20 that I think need to be spoken on, spoken about. And people
21 have listened and, to a great degree, have responded positively
22 to the things that I think would make the system better. And
23 I'm proud of it.

24 MS. PRICE: I know you told me once that a friend
25 shared with you that being a judge would be a lonely or solitary

1 existence. Is that true?

2 JUDGE PRICE: Yes. One reason it's true because there
3 are many things that you get pleasure in, places that you would
4 like to go, events that you would like to experience, but as a
5 judge, because of the position you hold, you cannot. And I
6 don't think that was a great price to pay. I mean, I don't -- I
7 don't find it to have been something that I gave up a lot. But
8 yes, it has been pretty lonely because there are just some
9 things you want to speak out on and speak out about that because
10 of your position, you cannot. Some events you would like to
11 attend, it's best for you and the position you hold not to do
12 it. And lonely, yes, but rewarding outweighs the loneliness.

13 MS. PRICE: In whom do or did you seek counsel?

14 JUDGE PRICE: My wife at all times, throughout my whole
15 career. From the beginning to now, she has been the best
16 counselor I could have, and I never found her counseling to be
17 errant or wrong.

18 CHAPTER FIVE: CHAPTERS YET TO BE WRITTEN

19 MS. PRICE: Chapter five. Chapters yet to be written.
20 You are an unfinished work in progress. One of the good things
21 about life's challenges, you get to find out what you're capable
22 of being far more than you ever thought possible. In 2015, you
23 retired, but you kept working. What have you been doing?

24 JUDGE PRICE: Well, I opened a law office. It's called
25 The Price Group. I was hired on contract to be the senior

1 advisor to the mayor of the City at that time. I handle the
2 administrative hearings for the City. We have a new mayor now
3 that was not the one when I retired. I continue in that
4 position of being his advisor, handling the administrative --
5 disciplinary hearings. I also serve as of counsel to the City
6 in major cases.

7 I do mediation. I have been very successful doing
8 mediations. And I serve on a major commission for the state of
9 Alabama, the Municipal Marijuana -- or Cannabis Commission
10 comprised of 11 members to implement the new marijuana medical
11 benefit program for the state of Alabama. So I stay busy, but I
12 don't see it as being busy or work because it's things I enjoy
13 doing.

14 MS. PRICE: Did you do what you set out to accomplish?

15 JUDGE PRICE: I accomplished more than I set out to
16 accomplish. Been a rewarding career bringing my family along
17 with me. Both my children are attorneys, successful attorneys.
18 My wife is still my greatest counselor and advisor.

19 MS. PRICE: Is there anything you'd change?

20 JUDGE PRICE: Not a thing.

21 MS. PRICE: Judge, our time has come to an end. But I
22 want to ask you as we close if there are any final words that
23 you'd like to share, words of wisdom.

24 JUDGE PRICE: I think I would say to young people, if
25 any ever read or hear about this transcript or video, to set

1 your goal. Make it positive. Focus on what you're capable of
2 doing. Don't be wide-eyed thinking that you set your goal on
3 something you're not physically or mentally or intellectually
4 capable of doing. Be disciplined and be willing to persevere
5 and pay the price. And it's a matter of who you stay away from,
6 not a matter who you associate with. That would be my advice.

7 MS. PRICE: Great advice.

8 JUDGE PRICE: Thank you.

9 MS. PRICE: I want to thank you for this time. I
10 continue to learn things about you, and I learned some more
11 during our time together today. It's been marvelous insight on
12 an incredible career and an incredible human being. Thank you.

13 JUDGE PRICE: I want to thank you for doing this
14 interview. I -- tears come to my eyes in the way that you have
15 done it and your sincerity and the praise that you have laid on
16 me. And you speak for your brother and you speak for your
17 mother. I'm proud of it.

18 MS. PRICE: Thank you.

19 JUDGE PRICE: Thank you.

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1 REPORTERS' CERTIFICATE

2 We, Risa L. Entrekin and Patricia G. Starkie,
3 Registered Diplomat Reporters and Official Court Reporters for
4 the United States District Court for the Middle District of
5 Alabama, do hereby certify that the foregoing 127 pages contain
6 a true and correct transcript of the interview of The Honorable
7 Charles Price in the City of Montgomery, Alabama, on October 21,
8 2021.

9 In testimony whereof, we hereunto set our hand
10 this 26th day of December, 2023.

11
12 /s/ Risa L. Entrekin
13 RISA L. ENTREKIN, RDR, CRR
14 Official Court Reporter

15 /s/ Patricia G. Starkie
16 PATRICIA G. STARKIE, RDR, CRR
17 Official Court Reporter
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