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"I'm a career politician, fortunately or unfortunately, and I

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could see that I had a unique opportunity to bring all these groups together to spotlight the contributions of volunteers and to encourage others to help. Without the work of volunteers, it would be impossible for the institutions of the community to operate. They deserve recognition and I want to give it to them. We'll stay here longer than we will elsewhere. This meeting is a priority for me."

- As we stood in the corridor while he met people, he came over and said, "I meet a lot of these same people other places I go. It finally dawned on me that it's the same general group of people you see here who help out in all our community institutions. These people here are the fabric of the community."
- They are also the kind of people who support him; because he is one of those community activists, too.
- Later, in his talk, he mentioned how he and Nate Cook used to ride around "for hours and hours" in some part of Philly safety patrolling of some sort. Must ask him.
- He said that his father and mother operate a center for wayward young people of some sort.
- He's a second generation congressman at least. Bill Gray--CF. Stokes was a first generation in which being a congressman was a big deal. It's less so for CF. He's had several predecessors actually (Nix?) and Blackwell. But he calls Gray, "my predecessor--well, my real predecessor--in spirit any way." He's not interested in being called Congressman. (He uses term "congressperson" and also "African American" when he describes make up of district.) For Stokes, as first congressman, it was a big deal. For CF, it isn't. He's awash in activist, community, help groups.
- When we arrived at the volunteer event, riding up the elevator, someone thanked him for a picture of himself. And the first woman I met said, "All I want is a picture." I didn't hear more of that, although people took his picture with themselves all day. The point is, I took a mental note that it was "like Stokes." But it wasn't. (But James Mitchell (Mitch) was about as stolid as Art Nukes--but not Sam Brooks. Ray Jones is a gregarious greeter--on his way to DC as Executive Assistant.
- Going into the volunteer fair, he made point that he'd been doing this sort of thing for a long time. "We had a program

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'Drug Free in '93' that really caught on. We had hundreds of posters, we went on TV. It showed me that a public official can help."

- For his talk, "Volunteers make the everyday things that happen, happen!" Says he's spoken often at groups that are rewarding volunteers--Medical College, Emergency Center. Says his "brother" who runs "Fattah's Food for Thought," "feeds thousands of people every month." Wants to recognize the diversity of people who do volunteer work. "We could fill a stadium 100 times the size of this room to honor the volunteers who make a contribution to a better community."
- "The great lesson of life is that we grow by helping others."
- "Those who know the importance of service to others will reap their reward now and in the hereafter."
- "We did not meet to talk about what's wrong and what's not happening, but to see what's good and what is happening."
- "I didn't start this program, but I've had a unique vantage point as a state representative, state senator and now a congressman. I've worked for affordable housing. And I know that none of it would have been built without volunteers."
- He notes that there was a lot of press present and he says that "usually the press focusses not on the planes that land, but on the planes that crash." Ray was pleased that Channel 6 came.
- He presented 100 awards to volunteers in nearly every group present. Said more groups will join the group. I have list.
- As we left the "fair," he said "Richard, any questions," and I asked him about the Blackwell race in 1994. He called me 'Richard' all the first day. I called him nothing. There was really no occasion for me to call him by name. He never let me get that close. I just tagged along. His son 'Chip' (13) joined us for the next two events. He did not go out of his way to be friendly. But on the other hand, he was an excellent interview--as I had hoped. He talked too fast and too densely for me to catch it all. But we went from 10-3 and he never asked me if I was hungry. He never suggested we have lunch or sit down together, or wondered what I would do from 3:00 p.m. Saturday till 9:00 a.m. Monday. He did say he learned I wanted to see exhibit at Art Institute and said if he'd known earlier, he might have gotten me a ticket. That

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was nice, but it was said as he left me in front of the hotel (I got in ~~by~~ myself). So nothing personal passed between us. It was all very correct, but no warmth and no kidding. But he did talk! And intelligently. He will go places, I think. From one day of contact, I cannot see him transcending Philadelphia. But he has the ability, no question. It's just that Philly seems so much unto itself as an urban center. I can see him as a leader in Congress--except that he does not come across as a team player.

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- On the Blackwell campaign, he said that "Most people thought that I would do well in the mostly white, upper income, liberal areas, but that I wouldn't do well in the row houses of west Philadelphia. That's what they thought; but I knew I would do well because I had represented people there. I won a smashing victory in every part of the district. I beat him in west Philadelphia, north Philadelphia and south Philadelphia. I held him in his own neighborhood and in his own division (precinct). I was opposed by the Mayor, the organization and the entire Democratic party establishment."

- "All but maybe 15-20% of the party people supported Blackwell. There were a few others who voted for me, but didn't speak out of fear of losing their jobs. I ran against the party. But it turned out that there's a big difference between the people who hold the titles in the party and the people who actually do the work. The people who did the work supported me. We ran a textbook campaign. There wasn't anything we did wrong. We did no TV. We relied on radio, white radio, black radio, talk radio, rock radio. We were always on the radio. We did direct mail, and we walked door-to-door, not just Mitch and me, which the press focussed on, but hundreds of other people walking in the neighborhoods. And we had phone banks. We didn't get money from the normal Democratic supporters--but we nearly matched him in money. He was maybe 85% PACs and 15% individual, and we were the reverse. We got a lot of \$1,000 checks."

early?

- He said that the 1st campaign when Gray resigned was "a 28 day campaign and the organization was able to slot their candidate before I got started." "I said I was going to run so I felt I had to. I promised, in the campaign, that if I lost, I would not challenge him at the next election. I thought who ever won should have at least one full term. I gave him that one term, then I challenged him and won." CF was in the State Senate all that time, so he was never out of office.

- "Everything we did in 1994, I had been doing in my previous

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racess. But we had to grow the campaign. There's a big difference between 60 divisions and 600 divisions."

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- I asked him about his base of support. "The anti-drug groups--and there are 40 of them--the groups concerned with education--like literacy. Liberal isn't exactly the right word, but people active in community organizations. People concerned with affordable housing, for example. There isn't an affordable housing project anywhere in the city that I haven't been involved in. We started rehabilitating a row of old mansions when I was in the State House and we've been doing them one at a time ever since. People knew me from 9 years of activity with various community groups. Everything I'm doing now I've been doing for nine years."
 - There's a strong sense that as he put it, "it's been a ten year project" for him--weekly in the community and gradually "moving up." He's been connecting with community-minded groups for years. It's all very natural for him.
 - I asked him what parts of district we hadn't seen today and he mentioned one big piece--"the north western part," Germantown, Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill and the part in Delaware County--we were in west Philadelphia and north Philadelphia.
 - "Forty percent of the district is in west Philadelphia and 40% is in the north west section. and that is the district. The rest is just spicing." The other parts--5% each he guessed--are north Philly, south Philly, Center City, Delaware section (Yeadon).
 - West Philly runs from poor working class to middle class. The NW section is middle class to wealthy--blacks and whites.
 - He defined district first of all, however, as 60% African American.
 - I asked if he'd call it homogeneous or heterogeneous. He passed. "I think there's a harmony of spirit in the district."
 - Then I said what I was trying to find out was whether it was an easy district for him to represent.
 - "It is an easy district to represent--for me. That's because where I've been and what I've done. I was born in south Philadelphia and moved to west Philadelphia. I went to school here--to Community College and to Penn. It is not possible to

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represent the district without paying a lot of attention to the University of Pennsylvania. It is the outstanding institution of my district and the biggest employer in my district. When I go to speak there, to the young Democrats, the law school, Wharton, I'm not intimidated. I'm at home. Off the record, Lucien Blackwell was intimidated by Penn, and so he never went there. And they felt ignored. He never went to college, so that was a problem for him. He (didn't feel) ^{scared} intimidated by some of the areas in the northwest section, so he didn't go there either. He had a very successful career as a labor leader. No one could talk to poor people any better than Lucien Blackwell. But that's not 'the district.' For me, the district is uniquely easy. I went to the Community College. It has branches and it educates more people than any institution in the district. I'm on their Board and I'm tuned in to what they do. I can talk with the environmentalists in the northwest section about their interests. And I can talk to the CEO's in Center City. Those are the groups that Lucien ignored. It's the comfortability of it. I think that's the best way to put it--it's a comfortable fit for me."

- And he continued. "I feel so much at home that it's like I'm not the congressman. My son and I ride our bikes up and down these streets. My mother and father ran a youth center; ~~people will vote for me because my Mom helped them.~~ I don't make a point about being the congressman. People call me Chaka. They don't call me 'the congressman.' I'm not interested in the trappings. My interest is in policy. Elections come and go. And I don't want people to focus on them. I don't. The mayor opposed me, but I've helped him. I understood. I helped the party chairman and he has opposed me, too. I think that my election strategy helps me too. The only tough ones I've had are the ones when I got elected. I've been unopposed ever since. People are not afraid of me any more. One of the things I've learned in politics is not to behave so that people are in fear of your winning. They just work harder. I want people to say 'Well, I'll vote for Blackwell, but I won't be unhappy if Fattah wins.' And that's what many people said. You don't want your election to be a death march or a nuclear war. I would guess that only 2 or 3% of Blackwell's supporters saw it is as do or die. Most of them support me now. So that's comfortable, too. As I said, It's a comfortable fit."

- "People who want to buck the machine--for whatever reason--now come to me. There are only two organizations in Philadelphia--the party and mine. And once in a while, we win one--not often, but once in a while."

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- He cited Mayor Rendell, Party Chair and Gray as people he had problems with, but whom he helped, too. For Gray, "it was just a moment, not a misunderstanding." Gray gave fund-raiser for CF last week in DC. And he let people know that.
- Discussion of media led to discussion of his attack on high rises and Housing Authority
- Didn't tell anyone in advance of his press conference lest they talk him out of it. "I'm criticized sometimes for doing too much on my own."
- At some point he said, with respect to something he was interested in, "and particularly black men," but I can't recall the context.
- "It's a ten-year project for me. I think I'm living off past accomplishments now. I'm in Congress, but I'm in the minority. I can work through the administration to shake loose a few dollars. In Congress, we can have our say, but they decide."
- I asked him about his treatment by the media. "I've been treated very well by the Inquirer. They have supported me every time. The Daily News has been good to me. They opposed me once, but have supported me since. They are our biggest papers. On a scale of one to ten, I'd give the Inquirer a ten and the Daily News an eight. Neither of them have ever attacked me. I've had a charmed life with the media."
- "I've gotten some attention in the national media. I've been on McNeil Lehrer nine times and I just finished one of those two hour sessions whose people sit around and discuss issues. This one was on the American family. It's playing in Washington this weekend--on PBS. There are congressmen from Philadelphia who have been here 16 years and have never been on national television. I have no problem with the media."
- "The publicity I've gotten at home has been earned publicity. I don't get puff pieces. The first time I had a profile done on me was when I got elected to Congress. Once, when the city was broke, I got a group of businessmen together to raise money and we put \$34 million on the table to save the city. Then I got my name on the front page. I earned that publicity. That's the only kind of publicity I get."
- "And (I got publicity) when I held a press conference attacking the Housing Authority for rehabilitating the high

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Chaka
high rises & community groups
play paper

risers and called for rehabilitating (all) homes. I was one of the first people to condemn the high rises--as inefficient and wrong. And called for the reform of the Housing Authority. That shocked people. The paper loved that story. It was an issue you could get your arms around. Seventy percent of everything I do has to do with education. But if you ask the people what they know about me, 80% will say the housing issue--it's the most publicity I ever got. But I earned it, too."

- He talked a lot--with facts and figures comparing the cost of rehabilitating high rises vs. older houses and the rules written by Congress that make it hard to focus on homes. He spoke of a press conference that was a surprise and, later, of hearings he held to take testimony from interested people. One of the interesting things he found was that a lot of the groups who wanted to help the poor, wouldn't go near the high rises.

- "We put a system of dots showing where the literacy groups went to teach people to read. And we found that the closer you got to the high rises, the fewer dots there were. The high rises weren't safe and community groups didn't want to go near them."

1.- Said he surprised Mayor Goode on his press conferences "Wilson and I were friends."

- After the volunteer fair, we travelled up Market Street along a busy street--underneath the subway tracks--lots of stores and shoppers. Everywhere we drove were boarded-up stores and boarded-up homes--and seemingly endless buildings covered with graffiti. The graffiti was, for me, the main sign of urban decay. The neighborhoods were all low lying buildings--not high rises, but in the pattern of west Philadelphia homes--one family row houses, two stories. Other groups probably built them, settled them and moved on.

- As we rode to the next event--a block event--CF talked about it. "The block organization is the smallest level of community organization. The next level is the neighborhood. Some neighborhoods will have 90% of their blocks organized, others will have 40%. They are not openly political. They are organized to cope with community problems. But the organizers are the people who are active politically and otherwise in the community. The group we are going to now sent me an invitation ten months ago--maybe a year ago. So you can see how well organized they are."

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- number = students
- The block event we went to was a program to reward ⁶kids on the block who had graduated from some level of schooling--from elementary (1) to high school (3) to college (2). It was on the north block on Dewey Street (which was bisected by a larger street (60th, I think). It was a narrow side street, blocked off at both ends by a police sign. It was solid brick row houses on both sides, two stories, with front porches, a few awnings. The curbs were painted white, there were big wooden tubs of flowers along both sidewalks. Many of the doors and grillwork were decorated. (It was a boiling hot day.) It was treeless. A couple of colored flags flew from light poles. There was no American flag insight. It must have been like a thousand other side streets in Philadelphia, except that it was a neat, clean, cared for and watched over street. A family street--of people trying to raise children to follow the right path.
 - Midway down the street, in the center of the street, about 50 chairs had been placed in a kind of circle. They were partly shaded by five beach umbrellas. There was a podium and loud speaker. There were about 20 children and 10 adults and the woman master of ceremonies had just begun when we got there. We had a prayer from the preacher, the singing of the "negro" anthem "life every heart and sing," a talk by a uniformed woman from ROTC (she talked about following your dreams and not about recruitment--so I didn't understand that) and then CF talked and then we left. It's interesting that there was no salute to the flag and no patriotic trappings--except the ROTC woman--if you count her and she did certainly represent the military (a way up for many blacks).
 - The other interesting thing about the setting was the predominance of women. Among the 30 people sitting at the ceremony were three men. The reverend, CF and an old man sitting with the children. All the other adults were women. On the porches and on the nearby sidewalks were people watching the proceedings and clapping at appropriate moments--maybe 25 more. Of these, I saw four other men. One was cooking hot dogs and hamburgers over a large grill nearby. (Another grill--down the street--was tended by a woman.) One was lounging on the steps, one came over and said hello to Mitch and, as we left said, 'I'm going to lie down now.' Two were typical young boomer fathers, dressed in shorts and tending small children and baby carriages. The fourth was a man on a porch who started talking loudly and critically and was shoved back into the home by the two women on the porch. Most of the onlookers were women and children. And throughout the ceremony, little kids rode bikes, walked around and got

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"shooshed" by adults--mostly women. Several women, including one of four women speakers, had white muslim headware. The people who brought me a chair, ice and water and who righted the umbrellas and the potted plants when they tipped, were women. The ones who tried to get the tape to work for them were women. The three speakers who had the kids write down 'what you want to be when you grow up' and 'what do you like to do most'--to try to get them to think very broadly and imaginatively about their careers (and they did!) were women who had organized to help kids think about education. They were articulate, enthusiastic and warm. It was a kind of exercise I hadn't witnessed before, and it was just one more hammer being applied on importance of education.

- The people on this block represent the heart of black aspirations and the concern for basics. It was very authentic, reassuring and hopeful.
- CF was appropriate speaker because he is steeped in value of education and sees this as the pivotal need if blacks are going to make it. He was inspirational.
- Excerpts from talk:

"The only way we'll be strong is if our children get an education."

He listed a litany of the sorts of people "who start out at things and don't always finish them--because finishing is often a difficult course of action."

You must "start out and keep on going--see it all the way through even though the going gets tough."

Some people "make excuses for why they don't get things done."

"People here asked me a year ago if I would come. There was no way I wouldn't be here. The people who asked me were betting on you--that you would graduate, that you would cross the finish line--and you did."

"My grandmother was ecstatic when I was elected to Congress. When she was young, she wasn't even allowed to vote."

"I went to the best high school in the whole world--Overbrook. When I showed up, the counselor put me into the wood shop. I asked her why and I told her I didn't

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want to go to the wood shop. She said we took you out of the academic program. Maybe you should go on the auto track.' I said, 'I want to go to college? She said, 'you're not college material.' This woman did not know me. She didn't know anything about me; and she had already made a decision about me. I finally got put on the academic track. When I got into community college, I went back to see that counselor. Then when I got into the University of Pennsylvania, I went back to show her again. When I was at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University, I wrote her a postcard. And when I got a graduate degree from Penn I went back and she had finally retired from Overbrook--thank God. Education is a life-long effort. Wilson Goode was sent to the wood shop, too. People are always giving our young people the message that they can't do something. Sometimes it comes from your own home. 'Boy, you can't do nothing.' A kid's hat may be on backwards, but his head is straight."

"Every person has a brand name all to themselves. What God gave then, he gave to nobody else and if they don't develop that God given ability, we'll never know what they could have done if they had done their absolute best."

"There's a big difference between work at McDonalds and owning McDonalds."

"Life is not fair. We all know that. But you should be fair to yourself."

"Set your eyes on the prize you want."

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"When I ran for ^(mayor) every elected official and the whole establishment lined up with the other guy. I got no big names, no big money. And I got elected by the highest margin of any of the 86 (sic) new members of Congress. I didn't let anybody else count me out--no counselor at Overbrook can tell me what I can be."

"Don't get sidelined on the dirt track of life. Get on the main line. Achieve against the odds. And never, never forget this: do your absolute best."

- In comparing districts, he noted "mine is not like Borski. His is 95% white, 5% black--plain vanilla."

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- Re his race, he noted that in state rep race, he ran in 50/50 white/black district. Check out the race.
- It's a district that he gradually grew into. He spoke of "moving up" from smaller to larger unit, and of "growing" his campaign. I think that adds to "comfortability" as he called it.
- When we met the next morning, we went straight to the church (Michelle said 60 would come, 6 came! "Monday is not a good day for ministers.") Mitch picked me up. We met CF outside the church. He did not greet me or acknowledge me as we went into the church and he talked with one or two of ministers. Then he came over to me and told me, in essence, to make myself at home. A big room with podium and tables in a "U" shape. People were putting paper on enough tables to serve an army. We clustered at one corner. I asked if I could tape anything he said that day and he said go ahead. I took notes, but no tape--too conspicuous. "It would have made the minister nervous," he agreed afterward. The questions were all (but one) very political and pro-Democratic. I'll go through them later.
- On way to his district office, I asked him about local politics, by saying that it seemed to me that it's impossible to understand Philly politics and yet necessary to understand what he does. My dilemma!
- He laughed and agreed. "I worry first about my district, but then about the whole city. I'm influenced ^{by} in the city because of the prominence of my position. But it's a challenge every day to figure out just what a congressman can do. It's a very political city."
- Re his interest in world politics, "When I first went into politics, I had a big interest in world politics, but the longer I've been in politics, the more I've moved slowly away from world politics toward issue sorts of groups. I'm mindful of what's going on in different wards. You have to keep your hand in. When I began, I wanted to just run right over the party (he chuckled). I've learned that you can't do that because people pay attention to what the ward leaders and the committee people say. In any election it may be 10% of the people, or 20% or 30%, but they listen. We had as our goal last time to have 50% of the ward leaders with us by election. Of the other half, we let half of them go and we attacked the other half. We wanted to let people know that we had an organization that could attack a ward and take it over. And

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by election day, we had elected new committeemen and a new ward leader in six of them. Those six were with me for that election, but they may get drawn more into ward politics. For the past four or five years, I've tried to develop a dual competency--to work on policy and to work with the party, instead of running against the party. Lucien was in party politics. He was a ward leader, a leader of black ministers, a union leader. That was his strength. I wanted to run against the party. But I've learned it's easier to reach out. Some of the people at the volunteer thing were committee people. It may be just a matter of putting them on your mailing list or inviting them to a summer picnic. I have a better working relationship with the party. I've learned it's easier to create bridges."

- First, after the meeting, I asked him about Reverend McKaskill, who did a lot of talking and seemed to be savvy. "He's the operator. He's the leading politician among the ministers. He works for the Mayor and already he's worrying about the next election four years from now. He's very knowledgeable about politics. He's good at it. Some people just have an ear for politics. He's been very helpful to me." He had been in a meeting with Clinton recently.

- But he mentions ministers along with a lot of other groups--no sense like Stokes that they are the key to his constituency. For example, they said that they'd arrange this meeting before and cancelled it--and still only six people came. And by the way CF said he wanted to interact regularly with them, indicating to me that it was not a regular thing.

- I asked if he had anything to do with drawing his district--in state Senate. "Yes I did--a lot. As it worked out there was an impasse between the Democratic House and the Republican Senate. I was part of the impasse! The court had to draw up the plan and they took 90% of the plan drawn up by the Democratic minority in the Senate. I drew up the plan for the historically African-American 2nd District. I had more to say about it than any one--except the courts. The district I got was the district as I wanted it--hook, line and sinker. It was even more of what I wanted than I expected to get--because of what the court did, i.e., took the Dem Senate plan.

- I used the opening to ask if that was Nix's district (yes) and asked about the difference between Stokes as first generation and himself as third or fourth generation. He did not buy the idea of the symbolic difference that I was trying to establish. "There have been about 10 or 11 thousand people

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collected

elected to Congress since the beginning. And of those, only 100 have been African-American. That any of them should have been elected is a matter of wonderment. Because so few have done it, and because there are so few other offices possible, being the congressman is considered the pinnacle of political success. Because of that, my constituents hold me in esteem, almost reverence. When I come into the church, for example, they stand up. ~~I~~ I am the same as Bill Gray was when he was elected. ~~And he went further than any other African American in terms of his position.~~ He prepared for the ministry--I prepared for politics. There is a different level of preparedness--from Nix to Gray to myself. I am prepared to be a legislator. Perhaps I am more prepared to participate in the process. The quality of candidate may be improving with the generation--with people like Kurt Smoke. I hope that my distinction--not my legacy, I'm too young to speak of that--will be as a legislator. That is my intention--to be able to draft bills, to focus on public policy. I hope my accomplishment, my achievement, will be in legislation, not in how high a position I reached. It wouldn't matter to ~~be~~ what position I had if I got two or three bills passed. Very few people actually drive the policy machine. I want to be one of those people. I don't care about the trappings or the perks, except as they help me to legislate in Congress."

- "Something is going to happen in big cities. It may not be in the next Congress or the next. But sometime it will have to be addressed. For years, I've been working to put myself 'in the room' when that happens. I even got criticized in the state legislature, "Why are you so interested in national problems? Why don't you just take care of your district?" I think I have a creative, radically different approach for getting together fiscal resources necessary to revitalize the big cities. I've been spending my time building support for the bill and there is support for the Urban Coalition and from many mayors. LISC has endorsed my bill lock, stock and barrel. I tried to get support from the Conference of Mayors and failed. If you think of who can recite the problems and who can solve the problems, there's a big difference; and if you look at who leads and who follows, you see there's a lot of room for people like myself on the solution side. A lot of people give big speeches and get applause as if by talking about the problem we have solved it. They say 'we have poverty, we have AIDS,' but they offer no solution. We had to work very hard to come up with our solution--it was our tenth try. That's why there's not much competition in the business I'm in. There are no other proposals to drive fiscal resources into the cities. There are other people working on

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the problems--Dan Coates, Charlie Rangel, there is a very small number of people at the table--Chris Shays, Lazio, Joe Kennedy are sitting at the table. I've kept working. For instance, I have a mobile, mini-police station at _____ in the district. People love it. When it began, people came out of there houses crying they were so happy to see it. Before I'm finished, I'll have ^{one} for every area in my district. You don't get rich because you rise to some high position. The question is: what do you do when you get there? I've risen as far as most. But what is it you want to get done with the position. I'm young and just beginning. Many elected people don't spend time on solving problems. They spend time on the next election or on politics and maneuvering. I hold a big meeting after the election. I don't want to spend three quarters of my time the next two years fighting a primary. I want an organization strong enough to keep me in office so that I don't have to devote time to a primary. I don't want to spend time increasing my vote--anything beyond what I have is ego. What are you getting accomplished? That's the question."

- Re committees. I asked whether he wouldn't have to get on different committees to do what he wants with big cities.
- "You have to have multiple approaches. I could stay on the Education Committee and go up. The lion's share of my work has been in education. So I wouldn't be miserable as a 12 or 15 year member of the education committee. I'd be comfortable there and I know I could get a lot accomplished. But I'd like to get on a big, big picture committee--Appropriations, Ways and Means, Rules, Commerce. My preference would be Rules. It would give me range. I've got a lot of interests : K-12, job training, affordable housing, economic development, urban policy, institutional reform in Congress. People don't realize that people like Adam Clayton Powell and Ted Kennedy have a lot of influence--a massive influence. The legislation they pass lasts forever. They get things done. But who knows when the train starts and stops. I've done all the things I should do. I've been a fund-raiser. I've been a key and fundamental player in the black caucus. But there are only a few seats and seniority is still very important. The way things work around here, if you don't get situated where you want during your first four years, you stay where you are. I waged a fight to get on education, even though it's not my obvious first choice, because I wanted a safe harbor. If nothing else works out, I could get up and go to work every morning in 12 or 15 years as chairman of the committee. It does important work, even if it has no pizzazz."

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- I asked him what had been his toughest votes. He thought for a bit and then said the Bosnian embargo vote and been only tough one. That's because he took one position first and then changed his mind. He started out vs. the administration and ended up with them. "It was a hard vote because I had staked out a position on the first vote, and it was hard for me to come around to the other side. I'm convinced I ended up with the right position. That was a hard one."
- Then he said that there had been a vote where he had been alone vs. the whole House. It had to do with auditing the Congress in some way. He said that it was the tradition in Harrisburg to have a similar audit--but done on a bipartisan basis. "It didn't make sense to me. I thought there would be at least 40 or 50 other votes; but I looked up and saw I was the only one for it. I don't think, as a lawmaker, you should worry about being all by yourself if you think you are right. But it was quite a surprise."
- I asked him if there were votes he had to explain to constituents and he mentioned foreign aid. "I voted against foreign aid--twice. The first time I called a conference with Jewish leaders to explain why I did it. There is a lot of money there for Israel and they were very concerned. I had said in the campaign I would support foreign aid. But there had been big cuts in money for Africa and Haiti and other places. Besides, I thought the House bill was the worst bill and that the Senate bill was better and more favorable to Israel. I said I favored the Senate bill. When I voted against foreign aid the second time, I didn't think I had to explain again. They understood why I did it."
- "I have not had any vote that I have been criticized for. As I said before, I've led a charmed life--still."
- He thinks about Jewish constituents as a distinct part of district. When we drove out of the city past a large number of high rises (in the Center City area), he said, "Those high rises have a lot of elderly voters--middle class, mostly Jewish." And later as we drove back through that area, or one like it, he said, "I did very well among Jewish voters here. Lucien thought that my name would cause a lot of them to vote against me. That's what they thought. They were wrong. When I was in the state legislature, I represented the Overbrook area. It's heavily Jewish and I did very well there." I said, "The Jews are very good Democrats." And he said, "for me they are." But I should talk to him about strains.

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- As we left his office and we had looked at the three pictures of the State Senate--looking for him in the pictures--he said, "I loved that job. It was the best job I ever had."
- As we were nearing my hotel the last day, he talked a little about his staff. He took several of his DC staff from the Hill. Claudia had worked on hill and was leaving now to get an MBA. She came from the District, originally. Will stay part-time in the district.
- Neal, "a hill rat," does leg. stuff.
- Talked about someone else, "one of the brightest young people I've ever known," who was leaving.
- Ray will be "bumped up." Is executive assistant and scheduler (I think). He's done press in the district. What will Michelle do?
- "One reason I've been successful is that I have the best staff on Capitol Hill." He stressed their substantive skills.

Confidential

When we got to the church to talk with the ministers, he said to me, "Reverend Gray has been very helpful to me. He held a fund-raiser for me the other night at his home. It was the passing of the baton." He sees himself as Gray's legatee. He knows that Gray was held in awesome regard and he wants to use that to define himself. At the same time, he has confidence that he can do some things that Gray didn't do--work out legislative solutions to serious problems as opposed to gaining a top position in the party hierarchy. I don't think he would disdain such a position. But I think--given his anti-party past and his strong substantive interests--he sees himself more as a policy leader than a party leader in Congress. Besides which, he probably wants to distinguish himself from Gray. So he uses Gray as part model and part a point of comparison.

- Re his interest in housing, he noted as we drove to Gray's church for graduation. We passed some recently built housing and some in the process of being built. In first case, he said he had put together the deal that got the money--in the state senate. He said that the deal "had fallen apart and I rescued it at the ~~first~~ moment." In the second case, he noted that the church was involved in the financing of the housing. He said that the wealthiest of the churches often get involved in financing "affordable housing."

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- He also noted during that trip that Gray's church was not in his district. "The church is not in my district. But 80% of the people who go to that church are in my district. People move out, but they go back to their church--in different districts than they live at. I campaigned in many churches outside my district because many of the people come from my district."
- Monday morning, we began with the minister's breakfast. I took notes. They are what follow from here.
- He was introduced by the pastor of the church--Rev. Campbell, who asked Rev. McCaskill to give the prayer.
- CF began by thanking everyone and noting that they had had a meeting scheduled earlier and had to postpone it. He said he thought it important that he "interact" with the minister "regularly" so they could talk about what is going on in Congress." I had thought when I went that this meeting would be part of a regular get together. It wasn't. I found that interesting. The ministers are important, but not central or pivotal--at least not collectively. I'll have to ask more about this.
- CF told a Martin Luther King story--appropos of fact that breakfast had not yet been served. Little girl wants a piano more than anything else. Raises money by setting up a lemonade stand. Father asks her what she thinks lemonade sales will bring. She says "a piano stool." He says piano stool won't be enough, you need a piano. She says, "I have faith that you will give me the piano and I want to be ready when it comes." CF said, "I have faith that breakfast is coming and I am ready." (Everyone laughed--ML King gets used for every occasion!) He came back to that idea of "have faith" later in his remarks, however.
- CF started by talking about the burning of black churches--talking about the facts, what Congress is doing. He brought with him a packet of materials on the subject and gave everyone one. (I left mine in his car.) It had material collected by Black Caucus, a copy of the Hyde bill (which took cap off of the arson cases that ATF could investigate).
- His main point was that the best way to discourage the arsonists was to make it clear that the churches would be rebuilt, and quickly--"to prove how 'useless' an activity it is." He said that the Pew Foundation (local foundation) had pledged \$4 1/2 million to the rebuilding effort. He noted

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that Hyde-Conyers law passed unanimously.

- He went on to talk about the budget--he spoke of the clash last time that it was a "testing time" and that they had saved some of the education and health and environment programs from deep cuts--"the settlement held things harmless." And he said there would be the same thing this year. His point was that all progress on budget would await the next election.
- He noted that Congress "has held 8 hearings on travelgate and we can't get one on the minimum wage."
- He called the 104th the hardest working, least productive Congress in 40 years. We have passed only two laws of any lasting importance--a telecommunications and farm bill."
- He then spoke of the importance of the upcoming election because "it might mean one to three new justice of the Supreme Court." He said affirmative action was at stake. He said case of Clarence Thomas "shows that we can make improvements." Where upon a minister asked, "Can't we impeach Thomas?" CF said of Thomas, "He doesn't have a conscience. He just checks with Scalia on central legal issues. He has no independent thoughts."
- Then he talked about the redistricting decision--that "funny shaped" white majority districts are OK, but funny shaped black majority districts are not." Spoke of Barbara Jordan's district as one that was struck down and said it was "very integrated district."
- His conclusion from all this was, in general, that "If you have a race based problem, you can't use a race based solution." In voting rights education, affirmative action, "African Americans have a hostile majority in Congress and a hostile Court. But we've been here before and we've been making it--and we will again. I go back to the story of the piano."
- For now, everything Congress does is "political positioning" and if anything harmful is done, "the President will veto it."
- He turned to questions: I have partial answers only.
- Q: These attacks on the Whitewater thing. How far are they going to go?
- A: "They have spent \$27-30 million investigating things back

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in Arkansas and they have found no wrong doing by the President and our First Lady. But they keep raising new questions and suspicions... The world we live in--not the ministers--is pretty cynical. People want to believe the worst. So the Republicans keep raising suspicions."

- He said Starr had a lot of "personal ambition" and was "more than objective." And he used Flake case (Flake being a minister). "You remember how they went after Floyd Flake in NY...people in public life have their burdens."
- Q: The Republicans are gaining in mind-set. People are getting shaky about the White House.
- A: CF's bottom line, again, was that they had gotten nothing on Clinton but "they keep bumping along this road" anyway hoping. He pooh-poohed what they had gotten--Hubbell put in jail, for example: "if you put all lawyers in jail for overbilling, you wouldn't have room in all the prisons in the country."
- At bottom, he said, not much can be done. So long as the majority is Republican, they control activity. "They want to cloud people's judgment, so they won't make a good judgment in November."
- Q: The media delights in all this. Are they Republican partisans. The major networks--they just keep the fires burning.
- A: The media doesn't get to substance. People have to see through what Republicans are doing, i.e., "cutting back education from head start to Pell grants."
- Finally he said, "If we've got to carry Clinton over the finish line, it's important to do that."(!)
- Q: Is there anything to these files?
- A: It seems to have been an honest mistake--says he's seen the list and it's mostly "carpenters, and other workers." Why, he asked, would they stop the list after A through G-- "hundreds and hundreds of people on the list were not players, only 5 or 6 were Republicans."
- "The Republicans want to have the hanging and then the trial."
- Problem lies with Congressional Records Act.

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- Q: Will Congress ever come back to Democratic control so we can get rid of Newt Gingrich?
- A: "Dems need 20 seats and Republicans won more than 20 seats last time by 2% or less. 20 seats were taken by a grand total of 19,000 votes. So Newt Gingrich is in charge of Congress by less people than you can find in one of my neighborhoods." And only 37% voted last time to produce "a very slim majority."
- He discussed these electoral facts at length, with examples from "a big chessboard."
- The lesson here was that a Dem Congress was possible and it was very important to them that the Dems win.
- Q: What's the conscience of America between Clinton and Dole. Dole seems to be catching up.
- A: PA is a key state for the Republicans--he went into electoral college arithmetic a little--pointing to PA as a key.
- Republicans "are sewing seeds of doubt." They are "skillful at throwing mud."
- Clinton is really 11-12 points ahead. "The pressure will be applied and it will be the most negative campaign you've ever seen because there's a lot at stake. A win for the Republicans will keep them in office for a long time. The election will be the super bowl of super bowls."
- Q: On this matter of cancelling the insurance of black churches--will it be addressed? (The only non-political, non-partisan, policy question of the session!)
- A: "I promise you it will. It's a pattern of insurance companies to "want to cancel your insurance when you need them...we have to show people that the churches will be built back overnight. The Black Caucus has taken it up."
- He said that the church burning "has brought people together" and he cited Conservative Coalition support for Hyde-Conyers bill. But he went on to say that it's not enough for people to attack the fires; they need to attack "the context" too. And he went on to note that the Republicans called Clinton "political" for going to the black churches and ministers to talk to them. He compared this to Newt Gingrich blaming the

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welfare system for "the South Carolina girl" for killing her two children." "And the Republicans are attacking the President for being political?"

- He went on to talk about how "The Republicans are very consistent." They took away the funding of the Black Caucus, the DSG etc., "they've been trying to stifle information all day."
- "Anyone who speaks out against what the Republicans want to do has become a victim. Their actions are not hidden. They are a frontal assault. They are almost like bullies in protecting their majority."
- Q: Rev. McCaskill: If Panetta was as simple as you have been, people will understand. But I listened to him and I tried to figure out what he was saying. But I didn't understand from a hill of beans what he was saying... I said this to the President and he cracked up. Their character issues have been the dark horse that the Republicans have used.
- Here he stopped, looked at me and said, "You're among us, my friend." CF waved his hand and said quickly, "He's all right." I nodded as if I agreed.
- A: CF said he had gotten some things for Philly and had "brought home the bacon." But he didn't want to dwell on that. Point he wanted to make was the absolute need for a Democratic majority. He said he had "a major piece of legislation to provide urban aid, endorsed by many mayors" that would produce "a wind fall of dollars to revitalize distressed neighborhoods."
- Said he had support from some moderate Republicans.
- He said he was going to be the chairman of the President's campaign in PA.
- Q: What is the importance of the balanced budget by 2002. (Well, here was the second policy question, I guess.)
- A: "Newt Gingrich pulled 2002 out of thin air." He made it clear he thought that budget won't be balanced by 2002 and it's not important that it be--only important that government be sound over the long run. Some years you spend in emergency, other years you don't. Balanced Budget Amendment a bad idea. Clinton has reduced deficit from \$2.90B to \$130B-

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-an imporant accomplishment.

- Re welfare cuts: "The Republicans would have you believe that the whole country is on welfare." 70% of people on welfare are on for less than a year. It's serving the purpose, therefore, that it was intended to serve.
- Q: What are we going to do about the second floor of City Hall? It's very important that we get together and agree on a candidate. Our people are hurting and we can't afford a fight." (i.e., the next mayor's race.)
- A: I agree with you. And I would be happy to join you in those conversations. But until the November election, that is my priority. On the day after the November election, on Wednesday after Tuesday, I will be happy to sit down with you."
- One net result of the highly political Q and A is this: that African Americans have a very large stake in the results of the November election--far more than most groups in the country. And if they didn't know it, CF was making it very clear.

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