Oral History Interview of State Representative Brian P. Wallace

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Interviewed by: Matthew Wilding, Suffolk University Student from History 364: Oral History

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Interview Summary

Brian P. Wallace, a Massachusetts state representative and resident of South Boston, discusses the impact of the 1974 Garrity decision, which required students to be bused between Boston neighborhoods with the intention of creating racial balance in the public schools. As an aide to then-state representative Ray Flynn, Representative Wallace witnessed firsthand the feelings of local politicians in the aftermath of the decision. In this interview he reflects on the reactions of the city's residents to the decision; the impact of media reports; Congressman John Joseph Moakley's position on the issue; and the negative effects of the decision on the city of Boston and its schools.

Subject Headlines

South Boston (Mass.)
Busing for school integration
Flynn, Raymond L., 1939-
Garrity, Arthur W., Jr., 1920-1999
Moakley, John Joseph, 1927-2001
Morgan v. Hennigan (379 F. Supp. 410)
Wallace, Brian P., 1949-

Table of Contents

Part 1

Interview transcript begins on next page

This interview took place on March 2, 2005, at the office of State Representative Brian Wallace at the Massachusetts State House in Boston.

Interview Transcript

MATTHEW WILDING: It is March 2, 2005. This is Matt Wilding interviewing. Can you introduce yourself, please?

BRIAN WALLACE: State Representative Brian Patrick Wallace.

WILDING: And where are you from, Brian?

WALLACE: South Boston, Massachusetts.

WILDING: Where did you go to school?

WALLACE: Grammar school in South Boston, South Boston High School. I attended Loyola College in Montreal. Boston State College and Emerson College.

WILDING: And when did you graduate high school?

WALLACE: In '67.

WILDING: When did you start working in the public sector?

WALLACE: It was actually 1970 that I started working at the state house for then-state representative Ray Flynn.[1] I worked as an aide for him full-time then and then part-time four years later.

WILDING: And what was your position at the time of the Garrity decision?[2]

[1] Raymond L. Flynn (1939-), a Democrat, represented South Boston in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives from 1971 to 1979. He later served on the Boston City Council from 1978 to 1974, then as mayor of Boston from 1984 to 1993.

[2] The Garrity decision refers to the June 21, 1974, opinion filed by Judge Arthur W. Garrity in the case of *Tallulah Morgan et al. v. James Hennigan et al.* (379 F. Supp. 410). Judge Garrity ruled that the Boston School Committee had "intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation" in the Boston Public Schools. When the school committee did not submit a workable desegregation plan as the opinion had required, the court

WALLACE: I was an aide. I was an aide to Ray Flynn at that time.

WILDING: When did you first hear about the decision?

WALLACE: We had heard it was coming down sometime in June. We knew all about the case obviously from the lawsuit. I think it was June twenty-first, if I'm not mistaken, that we were actually walking out of the building, and we ran into the governor at the time who was Frank Sargent. He was the one who actually told us that the decision had come down that day. I think it was June twenty-first.

WILDING: And were you expecting the decision?

WALLACE: Well, yeah, we were expecting it, we just didn't know—it was getting late. I think it was the last day of school and it was getting very late, especially given the fullness of the plan. If it was a simpler plan it might have been easier to install or to put together, but this wide-sweeping plan with only a couple of months to do just gave everyone a fit basically.

WILDING: Now do you think this decision could have been prevented?

WALLACE: No, I don't think it could have been prevented. I think the federal court had to step in. There were a lot of plans on the table. This was the most radical plan. One of the plans that we had asked them to start that September was to start with the first grade kids. Start with them so that no one would be grandfathered in. It would be—all the first grades across the city would be included in the plan. Second grade would basically go on as was. There were other plans to just do high schools; there were a number of plans on the table. This was by far the most far-reaching and the most radical of the plans.

WILDING: Now was this the plan you guys were expecting to see?

WALLACE: No, no. This was way beyond what we expected. This was basically telling parents that you have no control over where your kids go to school and they're going to school in two months regardless of what you feel or what your input is. This was a done

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established a plan that called for some students to be bused from their own neighborhoods to attend schools in other neighborhoods, with the goal of creating racial balance in the Boston Public Schools. (See

deal. There was no more community process. This was Judge [W. Arthur] Garrity saying that, you know, "I'm sticking it to a lot of these communities and I don't care what you think about it. Here's what's happening and take it or leave it."

WILDING: So what was your initial reaction?

WALLACE: I was pissed to be quite honest with you, because I knew from going to school in South Boston, I knew from working in the state house, and from being a city kid, you know, a pretty street smart kid from the lower end of Southie, I knew that this was going to have a devastating effect not only on parents and the kids but the school system in general.

When ninety-three thousand were in school a day June 21, 1974, they were now sixty [thousand] or sixty-one [thousand]—we knew that this was going to destroy the school system, it was going to destroy education. It would take thirty years to get back on track and they still haven't, and it was going to destroy all the sports programs that we had worked too hard to keep. It was just a bad plan made by a guy who didn't understand anything about Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Roxbury, or anything.

WILDING: What was Flynn's professional reaction?

WALLACE: He was the same as I was. He was very upset. Ray was a great athlete at Southie High. He understood the breadth of this plan. He understood that this was a death knell for the schools and this was going to force parents not only out of the schools but out of the city; out of our town, out of (inaudible), Hyde Park, Dorchester, Charlestown, East Boston. This was going to be white flight at its greatest and that's exactly what we saw. People left in droves. Some of them to never return, some of them are back now that their kids are grown but they couldn't, they wouldn't, they refused to send their kids to a school that they didn't approve of, and they in turn left the city.

WILDING: As far as communities are concerned, what did you see as a reaction with people who did stay?

WALLACE: Some people had no recourse; some people didn't have money to leave and they didn't have money to send their kids to Catholic school, parochial school. So one of the

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http://www.lib.umb.edu/archives/garrity2.html)

things we did was we formed our own academy, South Boston Heights Academy, where a lot of the kids who couldn't afford to leave, couldn't afford a parochial school actually went to school for a number of years over there. It was a substitute for the public schools.

Other people held their kids out of school for a year. Other kids never went back to school. There was a good three or four years there where kids were shortchanged. They lost their education; they would go to school and then leave and it just—you know, there were a number of kids that were lost in the system. Some of the kids got involved in violence because of this and ended up in jail. There's a kid I knew up from Southie who threw a rock at a bus, which no one condoned obviously, but he got arrested for it and he ended up going to jail. He got out, did something else. This kid became a career criminal and I'm not sure any of that would have happened. You know, he wasn't the nicest kid, but still, he didn't have a chance and it was too bad.

There was a lot of violence on both sides of the issue, on both sides of the buses, and none of that was reported. If you had read any of the news reports those days it was the people of South Boston who were racist and bigots and hated everyone and that really wasn't the case. That was unfortunate and that's what the reporters reported, that's what they were told to report and they did. It ended up like we were the bad guys, we didn't want blacks in our schools.

In actuality we didn't want our kids going to schools that we didn't approve of. We wanted to have some say in our kids' education, but they turned that around. They turned that around and because of the first day, because of the buses coming up the hill and all the problems, that played into the media's hands and they now had the scapegoat. It was never going to be Garrity, the scapegoat was us. And we wore that. We're still wearing that. We're still wearing it to this day. Some people when they think of Southie they think of racism, the think of all these negative stereotypes and I wish they'd come over there spend some time over there and see what a great community we have.

WILDING: You mentioned your involvement in South Boston Heights.

WALLACE: South Boston Heights Academy.

WILDING: Academy?

WALLACE: I really wasn't involved in that. That was a number of parents who got together and formed that and it lasted I think four or five years.

WILDING: How would you, at the time of the decision, both right before and right after, how would you characterize the neighborhood of South Boston?

WALLACE: Southie was a very, very loyal community. South Boston High at that time I would say was really kind of a focal point in the community. Most of the kids either went—don't get me wrong, kids from Southie went all over the place. In 1967 there was a picture in the *Boston Globe* and there were twelve boys from Southie who were captains of high school hockey teams that one year, which was unheard of; it was [Boston] Latin, [Boston] English; just about every school within range, the captain of the hockey team was from Southie. It was amazing.

Kids from Southie went all over the place and there were never any racial problems that I know of. I had this kid named Louis Blackingmore; he was a black kid that grew up on D Street. People didn't think that we had blacks over here. We did, but we got along. This kid was my halfback and I saw him the other day and he was hugging me and kissing me. They were the ones who were forced out. It was unfortunate because people took out some of their rage on people like Louis Blackingmore, Chris Baker, who was a black kid who was living in Southie.

The plan enraged people on both sides. White and black. And I felt bad for those people who had lived here their wholes lives who were now all of a sudden subjected to torment from the very people that they grew up with. It really—it really—it got to the worst form of people. It got to their inner soul and it was a terrible, terrible—those two years were the worst years I think of my life. It was just awful around here. There were helicopters; you know, you'd think it was a war zone. You wake up in the morning with helicopters and you go to bed with them at night. Police beating up parents, patrons.

I don't know if you know anything about the Rabbit Inn incident where the State Tactical Police Force went in, and the night before there was an incident down there, and one of the Tactical Police Force, they said something to them, so he came back with twelve or fifteen cops all dressed up in riot gear so no one could see their face and they beat up the patrons.

There was a federal lawsuit about it but they split people over with clubs, and this is what was going on then. It was just a horrendous time in our history.

WILDING: Now was that covered by the media?

WALLACE: Yeah, the Rabbit Inn was because we went to court. Ray Flynn and I were actually coming back from a wedding when it was happening. I jumped out and I had my tape recorder and I interviewed people who were still bleeding from the head, and we used that tape. We went to court on that and some police got suspended or fired. So that was reported but we were testifying on the city council on that incident the next week when Larry DiCara came up—he was a city councilman—he whispered in Ray's ear, "A black guy just got killed on Old Colony Ave." And it was like, "Whoa," and we just stopped. He actually hadn't been killed; he got beat up. Right next to Blockbuster there on Old Colony and Dorchester Street. They pulled him out of his car and he ran into a house. And this is what was the everyday thing going on then. There were gangs roaming around and it was just—it created a lot of havoc. It created a lot of needless violence.

WILDING: Could you talk about the arguments for and against the decision? Do you feel comfortable with that?

WALLACE: Yeah! I mean, I understood that the school department dragged their feet on what they said was racially balanced schools. In actuality we were shipping black kids who were going to inferior schools to white areas that had inferior schools. The schools—the schools were the same. They were just shifting people around. It just didn't make any sense. The black kids—I spoke to hundreds of them and they said to me, "It's an insult to us as well." They said, "Why don't they fix up the schools? Why don't they make all these schools Boston Latin and then we wouldn't have to worry about this?" And they were absolutely right. They were more on target than any of the press people, you know. They get caught up in this, and they didn't want to have to go to South Boston. They wanted to go where they wanted to go. They were forced as well.

No one talks about how they were forced to go to Brighton. And one guy—I remember talking to a guy who had a first-grade daughter. She was six years old and she went to school in Brighton. Now he would have to take his daughter out at quarter of seven in the morning, put her on the bus, send her to the other side of the city, not knowing anyone there. You

know, he said, "I'm not gonna do that. I'm leaving." That's what people were doing. People, rather than sending their kids—this had nothing to do with race. This was the first-grade student going to Brighton. No one talks about any of that stuff, and of the stupid—I mean, I spoke to Judge Garrity once. Actually I spoke to him a couple of times, but the first time I met him was at the Brigham's [Ice Cream] right down at the courthouse a couple years after busing started, and I said, "Judge," I said, "With all due respect," I said, "had you ever been to South Boston before you issued that edict?" He said, "I drove through there once." And I said, "Ah, figures."

This guy did more to destroy the public schools, and he admitted it before he died. He said, "It was wrong. It was wrong. The plan never worked." And it didn't. We said that thirty years ago. We said, This plan will never, ever work. And it hasn't. The schools have never gotten better. The schools were better back then than they are right now. It's unfortunate, but we're not going to sit here and tell you we told you so. My problem is that we lost a generation of kids who just never recovered from that.

WILDING: Joe Moakley, in a different interview, had mentioned that as a politician he and people around him kind of just didn't want to touch the issue.

WALLACE: Well, Joe didn't because Joe was a congressman. That was a little bit different than being a state rep. Joe had other areas to worry about as well. Joe was representing the whole ninth district. Joe couldn't be out there as forceful as Ray Flynn could. Ray had South Boston, you know. That was his district. And people were looking to Ray because he was there every day. Joe was in Washington. So Joe kind of stepped back a little bit from it and let us react. He was against busing but he—Joe got whacked. Joe got hurt by busing. He got hurt a lot by it because people didn't think he was out there fighting for them and Joe felt he was trapped. He knew how bad it was but he was in a different office and he had to do what he thought was right. A guy actually ran against him in 1976 based on Joe's whole performance on busing. His name was Bob Flynn, and Joe beat him, but still. The guy got a foothold because people had thought that Joe kind of took a walk on them.

WILDING: Now as opposed to reaction, I'm more curious about the initial actions before the decision. Was there an attempt on the level of state government, like Ray Flynn, to do something before there was a decision?

WALLACE: No, because once it got into the courts, there was nothing we could do. There were some bills filed. One was the Parental Rights Bill saying that a parent had—I think it was 36-34—had to agree to put their son or daughter on any bus to go outside the district, but it just didn't make it. There were a lot of bills filed, but nothing really went anywhere. Once Garrity stepped in pretty much the die was cast, and this was the way it was going to be. Come hell or high water, whether the school came to a crashing halt or the kids did well.

I remember being in Garrity's court—this shows how much he didn't understand—he said—we were sitting there; Ray was sitting here, Kevin White[3] was sitting next to him and John Maclin was sitting next to (inaudible) who was a city councilor and neither one of us three parties were talking to each other. And Garrity said, "Why can't you three leave this room right now and work this out?" We just looked at him. He didn't get the politics behind any of this stuff. Politics in Boston is tough and it was a lot tougher back then because there were just a lot of hard feelings.

WILDING: (inaudible) Why do you think you couldn't work it out?

WALLACE: It was just beyond—the plan was beyond workable. Just beyond workable. You just couldn't—you're taking all the kids out of one town, sending them to another town and sending all these kids into your town. It was like, "What the hell is this?" You know, this isn't what we signed up for. We want our kids to go to the schools we went to. And there were some plans which said, "Well, let's do twenty percent. Let's start at 20 percent. Let's start at 10 percent! Let's start lower than what Garrity needed or wanted or thought was right and work it in." But it wasn't (inaudible). He would never bend. He never bended on any of that stuff. And then kids got stabbed. There was Michael Faith, got stabbed December sixth (phone rings, words unclear).[4] He almost died. We had asked—we had a big march the next day, that Monday, but the school was surrounded after that. People just all of a sudden came up there and all of a sudden there was like five thousand people outside the school. They wouldn't let the buses out. It was some pretty heavy stuff.

WILDING: You mentioned a bit about the media a little while ago. Can you talk about how the media handled the situation?

[3] Kevin White (1929-), a Democrat, served as mayor of Boston from 1968 to 1984.
[4] In December of 1974, Michael Faith, an 18-year-old white student from South Boston, was stabbed outside a South Boston High School classroom. James White, an 18-year-old black student from Roxbury, was arrested at the scene.

WALLACE: Yeah, the media was awful. Media was—I remember standing outside Southie High on the third day and this guy—a well-known—I won't say his name, but a well-known national news correspondent who flew in that morning. He said to me—he had actually flew in the night before because I had had coffee with him that night—and he said, "Brian, do you think anything's gonna happen today?" I said, "I don't know, why?" He said, "I hope so! I flew all the way in from California. [I] want to see something happen." Their opinion was that this was a cauldron just bubbling, and it was. It was bubbling and bubbling. And they wanted to be there when it blew up.

The *Globe* especially. The *Globe* was awful. The *Globe* was so one-sided on this deal, it was absolutely—you know, people in Southie stopped buying the *Globe* thirty years ago because of the way they handled the situation and they haven't bought it since. We were furious with the *Globe*, the way they handled this. They just made us to be the bad guys. We were racists, we were bigots, and no matter what we said or did, that never changed. And that's why Bill Bulger[5] and all those guys have had it out for the *Globe* ever since. Even the national reporters—the national reporters were there to see something happen. They weren't there to cover anything other than to see, waiting for this whole thing to blow up, and they wanted to be there when it happened.

WILDING: Were the same things going on in other forced busing communities that were going on in Southie?

WALLACE: In Charlestown there was. Charlestown—East Boston was exempt from the plan because of the tunnel, so Charlestown, Hyde Park, Southie, a little bit of West Roxbury, but Southie was the center. Southie was the focal—there had to be one community that people would look to and it became Southie. We were probably the most close-knit community. Charlestown wasn't *as* affected. They were affected. It wasn't total. It was like 40 percent or whatever. But we had parents—there was a group called ROAR, Restore Our Alienated Rights, which Louise Day Hicks[6] led, who Joe [Moakley] had beaten for Congress,

[5] William M. Bulger (1934-), a Democrat from South Boston, served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1962 to 1970, in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1970 to 1978 and as State Senate President from 1978 to 1996.

[6] Louise Day Hicks (1916-2003), a Democrat, served on the Boston School Committee from 1962 to 1967 (serving as chair from 1963 to 1965), ran unsuccessfully for the mayoralty of Boston in 1967 and in 1971, and served on the Boston City Council before being elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1970. She represented Massachusetts' Ninth Congressional District for one term. It was in the 1970 election that

and there were parents from all over the city involved in that. They actually went to city hall and the city council chambers every Wednesday night and there were a couple thousand people involved in that.

WILDING: Regarding the violence in Southie, do you think the violence was properly represented? Was it as violent as the media made it out to be?

WALLACE: Yeah. It was bad. It got—the more the media played it up, the worse it got. They made these kids—I mean, some of these kids had nothing in their lives and all of a sudden they see themselves on the lead story of the national news. And the more they saw it the more they thought it was cool. They're on the—"Look it, there's my friend on the national news," and these reporters interviewed these kids and they'd come down and talk to them and they made them feel like because they were throwing rocks and because they were lighting fires and because they were doing whatever that wow, this is interesting. The book *All Souls*[7] I think tells a lot about that. About how the kids would run—they would light fires just to have the fire engines come down and just—it was a game. It was a game to these kids, and the media made them out to be bigger than life. The media was—if the media had never stepped foot in Southie, things might have worked out, but once they did, they just took it to a whole different level.

WILDING: So you would characterize the media as the cause of the—

WALLACE: They were the instigators in a lot of the incidents, yeah. I remember one guy, one camera guy who turned around, whacking a lady in the face with the camera. Not meaning to—the horses were coming, and the guy turned around and whacked this lady in the face and her son ended up decking him, and then a whole huge fight broke out. The horses were awful. They would charge into the crowds and trample people. It was some serious stuff there.

WILDING: Is there anything else you witnessed personally that you would like to put on record here?

Moakley lost his first bid for Congress, in part because Hicks was an outspoken critic of forced busing in Boston, which helped her gain support in South Boston. Moakley defeated Hicks in the 1972 congressional election when he ran as an Independent so he wouldn't have to run against Hicks in the democratic primary.

[7] *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* was written by Michael Patrick MacDonald and was first published in 1999. MacDonald describes his experiences growing up in the projects in South Boston in the late 1960s and 1970s.

WALLACE: Just a lot of stuff. Just a lot of nasty behavior on both sides. Police—the police didn't want to do that. They had a guy named [Robert J.] DeGrazia[8], who was the police commissioner at the time, who didn't know anything about Boston, putting guys from Southie on the front lines. They didn't want to be there. They didn't want to have to do what they did. And then having the horses come into the crowds. It was just a horrendous time in our history.

WILDING: So this was police from Southie fighting their neighbors?

WALLACE: Yeah.

(pause—tape change)

WILDING: In this story, particularly at that time, there is a lot of talk about racism specifically as a motivation for the problems. How much of a role do you feel racism played?

WALLACE: It played more and more as—it didn't play a lot in the beginning, I mean especially when the plan was first announced. Over the summer I think it got nasty. Actually there was a big fight right behind you in that picture there (motions to picture on office wall of a beach). There was a huge, huge fight between Columbia Point blacks and Southie right on the beach there that got national headlines.

WILDING: Can you identify that beach?

WALLACE: That's Carson Beach.[9] It was a couple weeks before school started and you could feel the tensions rising every day and you knew that something bad was going to happen. But the more this played out, the more racial it got. I don't think it started that way. I think it started with the parents objecting to the plan. I think the racism played more and more into it to the point where Michael Faith got stabbed up at the high school. People were—I mean the kids—there was no learning going on at the high school. I had all kinds of friends working up there—teachers and aides—and the state police were in the high school, in the hallways. Full riot gear. That's how the kids had to go to school. There was nothing

[8] Robert J. DeGrazia served as commissioner of the Boston Police Department from 1972 to 1976.
[9] Carson Beach is located on the South Boston shoreline of Dorchester Bay.

going on at the high school; there was no learning—it was intimidation.

These kids went to the high school. They were—again—all of a sudden they became bigger than life as well. It was just a ridiculous way to go to high school. Especially the seniors. The seniors had gone to three years of just regular high school then all of a sudden, senior year they're on national TV every night, being called names, being interviewed on [television channels] four, five, and seven, being interviewed by the *Globe* and *Herald*. It was amazing. All of a sudden, this transformation that Southie became a focal point in the work for a while there. Especially the first few weeks of busing. You wouldn't believe the number of cameras that were outside there. It was unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable. We had people from Tokyo, Australia. It was just nuts.

WILDING: How long did the media presence stay in Southie?

WALLACE: Stayed almost the first year. I mean, not to that level. There was always media outside. I would say the first two weeks, the first month maybe. Yeah, right into like middle of October it was that saturated and then it kind of dropped off. When they saw the violence was lessening and lessening—it was lessening and lessening because no one was going to school. Kids would just leave. And the parents weren't coming up there because the kids weren't in school. And once they saw that—from my point of view the media was there to see the violence, to see something happen. And once they saw that nothing was happening, they kind of walked away from it. And they came back in December when Michael got stabbed. They stayed for another month, nothing happened, and they walked away again.

WILDING: Now you saw, I assume, and you can correct me here—I'm sure you saw some media coverage in action. Do you think the media ever skewed things as it was happening?

WALLACE: The *Globe* skewed it all the time. The *Globe* skewed it all the time. I read stories in the *Globe* and I said, "This didn't happen," you know. "Where'd they get this?" It was a good lesson in journalism for us to see that. And years later some of the same writers who made things up then were found years later making things up and they got fired for it. We saw that first hand. It was just—it was a shock to see that the guy would write something that were both witnessing. It was almost like Johnny Most—he was the Celtics announcer—and he would say things and you'd say, "Well, where the hell'd he get that?" And it was the

same way with some of these reporters. Especially the *Globe*. The *Globe* was just absolutely out of control. They said things in their columns and editorials that were just—lies.

WILDING: What was the end result of the decision in relation to the city as a whole?

WALLACE: The end result of the plan?

WILDING: Yeah, of the plan.

WALLACE: It ruined the school system. It still has a terrible effect. We're still paying fifty-nine million dollars a year for buses. Kids don't have schoolbooks. Schools don't have heat. We're paying fifty-nine million dollars for buses. It's absolutely ridiculous. It ruined the sports programs. The sports programs in the last ten years have gotten back on track somewhat, but there was a period there—I would say not the first years, because it wasn't actually that bad—the sports was actually able to escape. But a couple years later it was just—a perfect example, I'm a sports announcer as well, I do games on TV for Boston Public Schools, and when I was a senior in high school in '67, if I went to a Thursday afternoon game at White Stadium, say Southie against BC High [Boston College High School], there would be probably eight thousand people in the stands. When I do the games now, or the games when I did them—I stopped two years ago—on a Thursday afternoon there might be nobody in the stands. Nobody. Zero. And my producer would say—we're getting ready to go live, he'd say, "Lock your cameras! Lock your cameras!" Because they didn't want—if the ball went into the stands, say somebody kicked the ball into the stands, they didn't want to show the stands because there was nobody there so the camera could only go to one spot.

I had a friend of mine, his name was Dukie Walze—Dukie Joyce, I'm sorry. He was a great, great lineman at Southie High [in] 1963. Moved to San Francisco from '63 to probably—maybe '65 to '95. And he came back one day; Southie was playing Charlestown, which was always a huge game. Eight thousand definitely. Because they're all longshoremen, they all took the day off, all cops and firefighters from both sides were back. And he came to White Stadium, and he was almost crying. He said, "Brian, where are the people?" I said, "They don't come anymore, Duke." He just couldn't believe this. He expected to come home to the game and there'd be ten thousand people there, eight thousand. He just couldn't believe it. That's what happened. No one ever talks about that. No one ever talks about how the sports programs were ruined. That's unfortunate, because I was there. I saw it, you know?

WILDING: In regards to the sports program, you've actually written about this, I've seen. Could you just talk a little bit about the immediate effect on sports?

WALLACE: The immediate effects?

WILDING: Yeah. I know you wrote a little bit about teams falling apart and things of that nature.

WALLACE: Well, yeah, I mean—yeah. The first year they played football. They suspended the season. They suspended the Southie-Eastie game. The Southie-Eastie game was the biggest game of the year. You couldn't get a ticket to that Thanksgiving morning. It was just sold out. Fifteen thousand seats sold out, both sides. And they didn't play it that first year, which was—we ended up going down to the park and (inaudible) played Somerville. It was just horrendous.

And that was—that's what I'm saying. That was—those things, Southie grabbed that. That was their focal point. Southie looked to the high school for a lot of things. Sports would be one of them. The Southie-Eastie game was the biggest thing of the year, and not to have that was—it was a clear message that he [Judge Garrity] sent. I think he cancelled the game. I don't know. He was afraid of violence. We weren't gonna have any violence at Southie-Eastie, you know. Violence was happening everywhere else. Just—it just destroyed—like my example is perfectly relevant. You go from eight thousand people to none. None. No teachers, no parents.

Parents—one of the problems we have now is we don't have parent-teacher stuff because even today kids from North Dorchester are going to Southie High. Parents are working; they can't get over to Southie High, so there's no give or take with the parents and teachers. And that still happens today. If you live in Southie, and there's parent-teacher night at Southie High that night, parents can go up there after work. Parents aren't going to travel all the way from North Dorchester after work. It just doesn't work and so the school system has failed in a lot of different levels because of busing. Sports is one of them, I think parent involvement is another. I think community support is another. Some people don't even think Southie High is a part of us anymore. They walk by like it's not even there.

WILDING: You mentioned a second ago, "He cancelled the game."

WALLACE: Garrity.

WILDING: Garrity? Garrity cancelled the game?

WALLACE: Yep. He was afraid there was going to be violence there.

WILDING: Politically, I was curious as to what the impact of the decision was. Did this change campaigning after the decision? Did it change the roles of politicians in Boston?

WALLACE: It had an immediate effect on the 1975 mayor's race. It didn't have an effect locally because the local politicians were basically out—they were basically the ones who were out front. Flynn,[10] Bulger,[11] Flaherty[12]—they were basically out front. And it affected Joe in '74, '76 because this guy ran against him saying that he wasn't a Flynn, he wasn't a Bulger, he wasn't a Flaherty. He wasn't out there on the lines every day. It had an effect on that race.

But I think the big race was the '75 mayor's race where Kevin White was seen somewhat leaning towards Garrity's camp. White said—White never really came out and said whether he was for or against the plan. He said it was his job (inaudible) and he never—which wasn't good enough for most people. In my area they wanted him to say he was with us and he never did. So Joe Timilty ran against him in '75. Joe probably would have beaten him, if it wasn't for the Red Sox being in the World Series that year. Because it just knocked the election off the—Joe was gaining a point a day and was within three points of Kevin White when the Red Sox were in the World Series. And there was a rain delay of three or four days which knocked him back even further, so by the time people started focusing on the election, Kevin had regained his momentum a little bit and beat Joe. He didn't beat him by a lot. Beat him by a couple thousand votes. But that had an immediate effect on that race.

[10] Raymond L. Flynn (1939-), a Democrat, represented South Boston in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives from 1971 to 1979. He later served on the Boston City Council from 1978 to 1974, then as mayor of Boston from 1984 to 1993.
[11] William M. Bulger (1934-), a Democrat, served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1962 to 1970, in the Massachusetts State Senate from 1970 to 1996. He was Senate President from 1978 to 1996. OH-014 in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Mr. Bulger.
[12] Michael F. Flaherty, Sr., is an associate justice for the Boston Municipal Court and a former state

And you know, Ray and Bulger both announced for mayor in 1975, but neither of them ran. Ray ran for city council and he actually lost. He came in tenth—not many people know that. He came in tenth with nine hundred votes behind Joe Tierney. But it spawned a lot of candidates. Jimmy Kelly[13] was one who ran. Pixie Palladino[14] ran. She was in East Boston, a Louise Day Hicks kind of person. She ran and got a seat in City Council. John Kerrigan ran as opposition to me; there was another guy, but Kelly and Pixie were definitely two that—their only reason for running was busing. And they both won. Across the city.

WILDING: Now do you think the—that these effects on Massachusetts—Boston particularly—politics were beneficial, or were they negative?

WALLACE: As far as?

WILDING: Overall.

WALLACE: I think that they dissipated. Busing now is in the rearview mirror, so I don't think they—at the time—like I said, I think they had an effect on candidates running citywide who were strong busing—anti-busing candidates, and they ran as such. And people just ran and their slogan was "No Busing." That was enough. It wasn't about taxes or school. "No busing!" And some of them got elected. So I mean, it wasn't just Southie. Not just Southie was against this plan. The city was against it. And you see a picture of "Palladino from East Boston got elected to School Committee citywide," and she ran—her platform was "No Busing." That had to tell you something. That wasn't just East Boston that was supporting her; the whole city was. There were a lot of candidates like that. There were a lot of candidates who were on just anti-busing platforms, nothing else, getting elected.

WILDING: Was there any other solution to this?

WALLACE: Yeah, sure, yeah. The didn't have to go—first of all they didn't have to give us two months to do it. Last day of school they came out with the plan. Jesus, you know, the

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representative.

[13] James M. Kelly (1940-2007), a lifelong South Boston resident, represented South Boston in the Boston City Council from 1983 until his death in January of 2007. He served as city council president from 1994 to 2001. OH-019 in the Moakley Oral History Project is an interview with Councilor Kelly.

[14] Elvira "Pixie" Palladio (1931-2006), an outspoken opponent of busing, served on the Boston School Committee from 1975 to 1977 and 1979 to 1981. With Louise Day Hicks, she founded the anti-busing group Restore Our Alienated Rights, or ROAR.

teachers were gone. We got it at three in the afternoon. School was out and the teachers gone. Teachers didn't know where they were going, didn't know where they were going to be teaching. Could have done it over a period of maybe six months. Had meetings in the communities saying, Here's what we're doing. Here's what we're thinking of doing. What do you people think? What if we—? You know, instead it was just, Here it is! Here it is! You have two months to put this together. You have two months to change everything that's ever been known, and do it. And I don't care how you do it, just do it. Your son's going—your son no longer goes to Southie High. He now goes to Brighton High. Your son in Brighton now goes to West Roxbury High. You know? And that's it. And your daughter in the first grade now goes to Brighton. You know? People said, What? What is this? What kind of society are we living in where we can't even—where we have no say in where our kids go to school?

And that was the norm. And that's why—that's why it erupted. That's why people—you can only push people so far. Especially with their kids. This guy—I'll never forget this guy, telling me about his six year old daughter, who he wouldn't let cross the street without holding his hand, now getting on a bus to go to Brighton. He said, "What do they expect? I can't do that. I'm going to have to move." And that's exactly what—you know, you don't get that kind of eruption from something that's even somewhat amenable. It wasn't amenable to anyone.

The blacks didn't want it. They didn't want to be forced all of a sudden to come over here. They wanted to go their own schools but they wanted them fixed up. That would have been—instead of spending fifty-nine millions dollars a year on buses, spend it fixing the schools up, or building new schools. They didn't do that. They still haven't done that. They built three new schools in the past twenty years. I mean, that would have been the way to do this. The way to do this would be even to say, Okay, we're going to take two years, we're going to try to build three new schools in Roxbury, a new school in Southie, a new school in Charlestown, and then do sort of the magnet school approach.[15] There were a lot—there were private schools, there were magnet schools. These were all presented, and he [Judge Garrity] just [said], "Nah, I don't want to hear any of that. Here's what's happening, it's coming down, you better deal with it, you have no alternative." And we said, No, we're not going to do it.

[15] Magnet schools are schools offering special courses not available in the regular school curriculum and designed, often as an aid to school desegregation, to attract students on a voluntary basis from all parts of a

WILDING: Can you talk a little bit about Joe Moakley's role in this period in regards to busing?

WALLACE: Yeah, like I said, Joe was a congressman, he [Garrity] was a federal judge. I mean, Joe was in a tough position, being a federal official. The mandate is by a federal court. He wasn't a state rep, he wasn't a state senator, he wasn't a school committee person. He was a congressman. As such, he—Joe wasn't as adamant as some people would have liked him to be, but Joe thought that that was the role that he had to play. He let the Bulgers, the Flynns, the Flahertys, the Hicks', the Palladinos do what they had to do on the local level and he kind of sat back a little bit. Joe didn't attend a lot of marches, and that hurt him I think. A little bit, for a while. But people got over it. They understood. Joe wasn't the screamer and yeller. Never was. Joe Moakley was always a behind-the-scenes type of guy. Joe Moakley was the guy who would get the Democrat and the Republican to agree on something. He was always the dealmaker, and that wasn't his style. It wasn't his style to go out screaming about this and that and the other thing. He was more conciliatory. And he found himself in a rough position, you know. Speaking to Joe personally—I had many times—he felt that Judge Garrity screwed us. But he thought that his position, being a federal official, didn't allow him to come out and say that as Bulger and Flynn had said it, because they were local officials, and that's the way he played it.

WILDING: Do you agree with his stance on this?

WALLACE: At the time I didn't. Joe and I had words. I didn't think he was doing enough. He was mad that one of my friends was running against him. We worked it out, but at the time I thought that Joe was—he was avoiding the issue. And talking to him years later, I realized that he was doing what he had to do. He told me, "Brian, I was a federal official, it was a federal court, a federal judge." He said, "I wasn't a school committee member anymore. I wasn't a city councilor." And I said, "You're right." He usually was right.

WILDING: Looking back do you still feel the same way about all this as you did? Has anything changed?

WILDING: No, I still feel strongly—I feel that Judge Garrity ruined the Boston school

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school district without reference to the usual attendance zone rules. (Definition from the Library of Congress.)

system. I felt it June 21, 1974, and I feel it March 2, 2005. The guy just didn't get it. The guy just threw money—he threw buses at us. He walked away from the system. He had no clue. This guy had no clue, and he had never been in South Boston. Probably had never been in Roxbury. Didn't know any of the people, how they reacted. Didn't know how we lived, how we got by, how we got by paycheck to paycheck. Didn't know the pride that we had, and just underestimated that completely—the pride and the loyalty we had to our schools. The high school was more than just a building. (inaudible) It was more than just a building; it was seen as the focal point of the community. And to take that away—to take that away just—we said, No, we're not going to let you or anyone else do that. This is our school. This is where we went to school. This is where our grandparents went to school. This is where our kids are going to school. We're not going to let you take that away.

And everyone said, "Oh, no, you just don't want the blacks coming in." It was never that. But the press would never say that. It was never about the black kids coming in. It was about us being taken out of there. It's eighty-five percent black now, but it was always—coming from my standpoint anyway, it was about him telling us that our kids couldn't go to our schools, and that was—but if you read the stories back then it was all about, "Oh, they hate blacks. They don't want the blacks coming into Southie." Some people—some people, that's exactly how they felt. There were people—there were racists out there in Charlestown, there were racists in Southie, there were racists in Eastie. There were racists in Roxbury. And some people felt that way. They didn't want blacks anywhere near the high school. Still do. But the majority of the people rejected this plan because they didn't want their kids taken away from their educations and they wanted to dictate where their kids went to school, and that was taken away from them. And that building was taken away from us.

WILDING: With busing where it is today, are there signs of improvement, or is it still as bad as it was?

WALLACE: I think some schools have improved. Some schools have—some schools—they're just changing the names. They changed the name of Southie High. It's no longer South Boston High School, it's now the South Boston Educational Complex, housing Monument, Charter, and Odyssey Schools. It's three different high schools now. So they're doing that, and I testified in from of the school committee. I said, "If you think that by doing this you're going to erase busing, you're not going to do it." I said, "That's what you're trying to do, calling this the Monument High School and Excel High School," and I said,

"You're not going to do it." But that's their idea. We're dealing with people now who have no idea about the history of the schools. There are a couple who do, but for the most part they don't. I don't see a whole lot of good going on. Southie High—the Monument isn't bad. There is some education going on, but what you should strive to do is strive to make all the schools like Latin, Latin Academy and O'Bryant. And there's only three of them. Three exam schools.

And the other schools have fallen by the wayside. It's just a—it's a shame, you know? It's really a shame. It's not only the high schools, it's the middle schools—Gavin School. Gavin School, there is no education going on there. They're fighting all the time. I was there—last time I was there there were three fights while I was in there. It's just a horror show. And it all started with that decision. I feel as strongly today as I did then. And I said to Garrity, I said, "You're going to destroy the system. You're going to destroy public education in Boston." I told him that in Brigham's. And he said, "No, we're going to make it better." And I said, "You just don't get it." That should be on his headstone: "I just didn't get it."

WILDING: Alright, in closing, is there anything else about this period that you want to have on record?

WALLACE: No, I think we covered most of it. I just feel very strongly about the media, about how they slandered us. They betrayed us and they didn't know us. They never really wanted to. They had a villain. A perfect villain, Irish Catholics. "They hate blacks." It was just so alien to some of us to read that about ourselves, because we never did. I guess we had a lot of blacks living in Southie at the time, but they never said that. They said it was all white. It was never all white. Boys' Club the year before, the club member of the year was Chris Baker, a black kid from E Street. But that was just swept under the rug. They had an easy scapegoat with us and it sold papers. And we fought back. And they didn't like that. We fought back by stealing *Globes* and not buying the papers and not letting—putting cars across the roads so they couldn't get the trucks out. We did that on a number of occasions. We fought back, and they didn't like it. No one knew we fought back, but we did. And they didn't like it. And I think that's—I think I'm more mad at the *Globe* than probably Garrity because they at least understood—knew what they were doing. Garrity didn't. Garrity had no clue until the day he died how bad he messed up the system.

WILDING: Alright, well, thank you.

WALLACE: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW